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LUTHER NICHOLS

BY

MARY S. WATTS

VAN CLEVE
THE RUDDER
THE LEGACY
NATHAN BURKE
THE NOON-MARK
BOARDMAN FAMILY
THREE SHORT PLAYS
FROM FATHER TO SON
THE HOUSE OF RIMMON
THE RISE OF JENNIE CUSHING

# LUTHER NICHOLS

BY

MARY S. WATTS

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LUTHER NICHOLS

BOOK I

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# LUTHER NICHOLS

## BOOK I

### I

Some twenty-five years or more ago, in the last decade of the last century, the Nichols family, residents of Deercreek Township, received an addition in the person of a boy baby whom they christened Luther. Mrs. Nichols came of German Protestant people; she was a Nagel, a daughter of Hermann Nagel that had the dairy-farm out beyond Adamsville on the Deercreek Pike, and a staunch supporter of the church. Alvin Nichols was probably quite indifferent as to what name the child went by, and would as lief have called it Number Five—young Luther arrived in that order, numerically. That he happened to be a boy was his chief, in fact, almost his only recommendation to his paternal parent; boys, in the senior Nichol's opinion, were likely to be more of an asset than girls, at least until they grew up and started out for themselves. There were enough children of both sexes already in the Nichols household, however, so that the newcomer was, in a manner of speaking, superfluous; but as Alvin himself had been known to say, what were you going to do about it?

The Nichols place lay a little way off the Pike, nearer

to town than the Nagels', though not, for that reason, more accessible; the main characteristic of the lane leading to it, according to Luther's recollections in later years, was bottomless mud, diversified with chuck-holes in winter, alternating with bottomless dust diversified with chuck-holes in summer. It was a truck-farm; Mrs. Nichols was wont to say that she had made up her mind right from the start when she first began to think about the boys that she would never take one that ran a dairy. She'd had enough of it, getting up at three o'clock in the morning to give the hands and drivers their breakfast, and keeping going from that on till dark! No more you'd got the dishes washed up than you'd got to turn round and begin on second breakfast, and it was that way all day long with the meals getting 'em ready or cleaning up, leave alone the separator and the bottles and the rest of the house, and if a cow got sick or anything, or one of the milkers hurt his hand or anything. No, she'd always said any girl could marry a dairyman that wanted to, it wouldn't be *her!* Other business like chickens or market-gardening or a s'loon business even, why, of course, they had their rush times, but it wasn't every day and every day; you'd anyhow get a chance to set down yet, ain't it? You Maggie, lemme see you getting after them weeds in the onions or I'll get after *you* with one on y'r seat that'll keep you standing up for a week!

The exposition of her views generally wound up with some such admonition delivered at the maximum power of Mrs. Nichols's lungs; an outsider, to hear her, would have experienced deep concern for the children's limbs and lives, but they themselves went in perfect equanimity. They were used to being screeched at with rough words—sometimes rougher than rough; their elders sel-

dom addressed them, or indeed one another, more gently, and the small talk of the family was likely to be carried on in a style direct, frank and unrestricted to a degree. Thus lived and conversed all the other children, all the other grown people of their acquaintance; by inference, the whole wide world. Luther and the rest of the youngsters accepted the screeching, swearing, beating, along with work, play and going to school, with the fatalism of children, as part of the order of things, natural and ineluctable.

To an impartial observer the truck-farm might not have entirely justified Mrs. Nichols's preference; but possibly no kind of small farming brings existence to resemble a couch of roses. Alvin, like most of his neighbours, had about twenty-five acres of indifferent land, not the best, not the worst. There was a frame house of three or four rooms and a lean-to on the ground-floor with a low, unfinished attic overhead; there were chicken and hog-pens and a barn; there was a cistern which went dry every summer, and a driven well which went dry in periods of prolonged drought—that is to say, every other summer. The place had been cleared of trees; none were left even in the little, unenclosed, weedy tract they called the front yard. The title was determined by its geographical position between the road and the west elevation of the house where there were a door and narrow porch; two sections of drain-pipe, up-ended and filled to the top with earth planted with petunias were marshalled one on either hand of the trodden path; but otherwise nothing distinguished the front-yard from any less formally named part of the premises, and merging into a territory given over to the straw-rick, the grindstone, the manure-heap, chicken-coops, cold-frames, the shed that housed the market-wagon, and a world of nondescript

litter besides, it became the back-yard without orthodox signs of transition. To the rear was a bit of hill-side pasture, high and stony; everywhere else, Alvin had the land parcelled out in rectangles studded in orderly rows with potatoes, cabbages, beets and what-not; and there he lived and laboured; there, in fact, the whole family lived and labored including that exponent of Sybarite ideals, Mrs. Alvin—when she was not washing or ironing or cooking or scrubbing or sewing, or painting the house, or putting in a window-pane, or helping shingle the roof. Her activities extended to a good many of the occupations normally assigned to men. "You got to help yourself," she would say. "Maybe I ain't so good carpenter or whatever, but them that don't like the job they should give me the money to hire it!" She looked upon these "jobs" as filling up or whiling away her by-hours; they were not to be classed with real work. But in justice it must be said that whatever Mrs. Nichols set her hand to she turned out in good shape, for all her semi-humorous disclaimers of skill; she was by nature neat and thorough, and had moreover inherited sundry old-world theories about thrift and industry and woman's place in the universe, archaic perhaps, but undeniably useful when applied to truck-farming.

She had inherited likewise her sturdy, peasant structure of body, being short, squarely-built and heavy boned with flaxen hair which by the time Luther came to know his mother was already thinning and plentifully streaked with gray, though she had barely reached her twenty-eighth year when he was born. Alvin was tall, spare and swarthy; and these two types of looks were repeated in the family with what many critics considered a singular perversity or lack of judgment on the part of Providence. Lizzie and Maggie were square, fair and

heavy like their mother with light blue eyes and broad, high-coloured faces which, no matter how wholesome and sensible and kindly of expression could not be called, by the utmost stretch of friendliness, comely. The boys, on the contrary, "took after" Alvin, but with improvements! They grew up tall and rangy, yet well proportioned; and they all had bright steady eyes like a hawk's, and sharply cut features and in particular a kind of dark and spirited distinction of presence which was frequently remarked upon in Deercreek circles, although with a different choice of words. People used to say with an emphasis that somehow clarified the phrase, that Herman Nichols and Gus and Loot all had a sort of *look* about them; and wasn't it a pity the Nichols girls couldn't have come in on that, too? Comparison never went further than physical characteristics, for the Nichols' mental endowment seemed to be about equal, or at least afforded no striking contrasts. They were average children, look or no look; boys and girls alike, they kept along with their classes in the district school over at Pleasantville without arriving at any eminence or showing marked aptitude in any especial branch, and left one by one after finishing the eighth grade—in other words, as soon as the child-labor laws ceased to apply to them.

Although the successive arrivals were spaced at intervals of not more than two or three years, there resulted enough difference in age between the earlier born of the family and the last, for Luther to be at the kindergarten stage still, when Lizzie and Hermann were going out to work. For that matter, it seemed to him, looking back in after life, as if for years, centuries, aeons, everybody in the world was older than himself, a condition the more noticeable because it apparently engendered in

all of them a disposition to "boss" him. This he bore with, on the whole, philosophically, once in a while sulking, or rebelling, or sneaking off, or otherwise misbehaving after the fashion of small boys: like his brothers and sisters he was the absolute average—always excepting the dashing and disturbing *look* he shared with Hermann and Gus. He went through the ordinary struggle with the multiplication-table and fractions: he memorized dozens of grammatical rules at school which he never dreamed of applying in his speech there or elsewhere: he learned to swim, and much preferred it as an exercise on a hot summer afternoon to picking tomatoes and sorting them for market, or bunching beets, or churning, or cleaning the stable. He liked baseball and he did not like being coerced to wash the dishes, indecently harnessed into a feminine apron. He took his turn at measles and fights and escapades and whooping-cough and adventures accompanied by windfalls of good or bad luck, in common with every boy that ever was created before or since: and at or near the age of fifteen, having completed the Rubicon grade, he felt himself and was deemed by those about him ready for the world.

By that time there had been a number of changes in the household. Maggie was married and living across the river in the country back of Fort William, the army-post. Lizzie worked making overalls in the Wearever Pants Company's shop, not the one in the city but the place they had at Deercreek Valley station on the Big Four, where the soap- and glue-factories and the desiccating-plants were: it was the same job she began with at sixteen, only nowadays she earned more and was in a fair way to becoming forewoman. Lizzie was a staver for work like her mother, and pretty tight-fisted withal;

she paid board at home rigorously, but laid up almost all the rest of her money with the Pleasantville Loan and Building Association, and wore the same Sunday dress for four years running. Both of Luther's brothers left the farm. Hermann, who always used to be a good deal around the railroad-yards and had a liking for the stir and business of the life that went on there, picked up a job with one of the train crews during some temporary dearth of hands, and afterwards was taken on permanently. For a time, while he was on the Hamilton and Dayton run, he still lived at home, or would come back for a day or so between trips; but various changes and rearrangements of the railroad personnel finally shifted him to St. Louis, and after that it was only at long intervals, gradually growing longer, that the family saw him. They made no sentimental outcry over the separation; the truck-farming career, as they pursued it, was too stocked with daily urgencies and duties to leave any room for sentiment, even had they been disposed that way. Moreover, according to Deecreek standards, the Nichols couple might count themselves lucky to have raised such a son; from the day of leaving school, Hermann scarcely cost them a cent! Gus worked and took care of himself, too, and might have stayed on the farm; but there had been some loud and violent disagreements about the value of his services which ended at last by his going off, bag and baggage, and hiring out to another marketman of the neighbourhood; so that, though less than five miles distant, he was in effect farther away than Hermann in St. Louis. After a while, they patched up a truce, but the young man was definitely established in his alien sphere by that time, and would no more have considered returning home than the senior Nichols would have considered inviting him.

These events, taken in sum, seemed at the outset to have decided Luther's future: everybody took it for granted that he was to remain at home, working for and with the old people: who else was there to do it, and what could he do but that? It never came into his head to question the fate thus meted out to him, much less complain of it: at fifteen he was quite without curiosity or ambition concerning other walks of life than the one he found appointed for him, and indulged in no gilded dreams about making a fortune and getting to be President some day, not being gifted—or it may be, cursed!—with much vigor of imagination. Whatever he had read in history or fiction—and he read as little as possible of either—about the lowly birth, the struggles and vicissitudes and ultimate triumphs of our favourite American heroes, blew through his mind like smoke without leaving a single trace. Nor did he long to ride the cattle-range, or go in search of buried treasure, or track down criminals by methods of sorcerer-like ingenuity: those careers were invested with the unreality he associated with everything in print except the front page of the *Observer's* baseball edition. Luther knew that what appeared thereon was true, because he had once or twice witnessed the very game described, and had noted that the reporters never made a mistake: they were infallible, prodigious, superhuman! But all the rest of the *Observer* was mere newspaper-talk, partaking of the same unreliability as other printed matter: he fell asleep over it. The day at the farm began full early, and Luther was likely to be very healthily tired by the time he had finished the last chore, and could sit down to literary recreation.

Release from school meant, first of all, by Nichols precedents, promotion to the wagon and to standing on

market. Every other activity incident to farm life was familiar to the children from the time they were five years old and could help shell peas or herd the chickens. But standing on market was a kind of peak of promise, a far, brilliant expectation; it was a recognition of approaching maturity, and corresponded distantly to the assumption of the toga. You stood on market clothed with responsibility, matching wits with other marketeers, buyers and competitive sellers alike; in that sensational encounter it behooved you to come off as much the best as was consistent with honesty, and meanwhile you were encompassed by, and must hold your own against, the hectic distractions of the city—saloons, ice-cream parlors, Shriners' parades, and fire-engines on the run. In fine, standing on market achieved the impossible, namely: a combination of business and pleasure.

Wednesday and Saturday mornings were allotted by old-time ordinance to Western Avenue market, where Nichols had his stand; all Deercreek Pike stood there, on account of its being the first market-street you came to, driving into town from that direction. The day before was always a busy one, crating chickens and putting up sausage in the winter, in summer picking and sorting vegetables or berries and packing them for travel; and in season there would be, besides, tubs of butter and the eggs, and not infrequently a fearsome high stone crock of cottage-cheese or dill pickles or some other not eminently portable dainty that, sitting on the seat in front alongside his father, Luther must hold and steady in an anxious embrace all the thirteen miles, lest too severe a jolt send it crashing to ruin—its own ruin and that of everything where it slopped and spattered. He conducted himself towards these crocks with

a morose care; they were personal enemies whom an ironic fate obliged him to clasp to his stomach with aching arms for hour upon hour, and he anathematized them heartily, but he never broke one. He was not perhaps too conscientious, though an honest boy enough; but he had no vision, or no moments of fine, exalted desperation when he felt he could count the world well lost for the satisfaction of letting a crock go to smash. On crockless trips, he would drowse off, lapsing against the stanchion that upheld the wagonhood; and anon come to with a neck-rending jerk, and the print of an iron bolt-head on one cheek; and blink dazedly around, and swallow, and nod again; and so by turns until they clattered over the cobbles of Western Avenue. He had to get up at four o'clock market mornings.

In winter it was still dark as night when the alarm-clock went off with a muffled ripping sound below stairs in the room off the kitchen where his father and mother slept. Since the other boys were gone, Luther had the attic all to himself, save for an occasional visit from bats or birds by way of the windows in either gable-end, or from the mice that sometimes with much eerie squeaking and slithering, scrambled up between the walls. There was a crevice of varying width where the floor-boards joined, or rather did not join, the roof; and where the rafters slanted down, a series of triangular pockets formed by the joists and intervening spaces offered what appeared to be in mouse estimation ideal retreats wherein to raise a family, when not preëmpted for the communal residences of colonies of mud-daubers. Mrs. Nichols always intended to lath and plaster the attic but had never yet, in her own phrase, "got around to it"; she was a little too old for that particu-

lar job now, putting aside the fact that there was no lively demand for a finished attic. Luther, like most boys, was not at all exigent, and capable of going to sleep anywhere, indifferent to such minor matters as privacy or comfort. His bed stood in the middle; he could not have sat upright in it elsewhere; standing, the ridge-pole of the roof was within reach of his fingers. The other piece of furniture was a backless chair. An oblong chasm in the floor where the stairs came up might have daunted a less accustomed tenant with suggestions of inadvertent, head-over-heels descents; but lifelong acquaintance with it had developed in Luther the automatic caution and facility of a mountain-goat; daily and nightly he skirted calamity by a hairbreadth margin and came off safe.

It was hot in the attic all summer—so hot indeed that he preferred sleeping in the yard or stretched on the floor of the wash-house; but in winter when he turned out to the reveille of the alarm-clock, there would often be thin windrows of snow along the floor, matching in position and profile the cracks here and there between the lines of shingles overhead, or even a cool deposit in the creases of the bedding. There was always plenty of this latter; the quilts and blankets lay about a foot thick, more or less, above Luther as he slept, and there was a husk mattress answering to springs in the sack-bottomed bedstead with a feather one over it. Mrs. Nichols was a good housewife and no one, man or beast, under her care, ever went cold or hungry or suffered from any form of neglect. Luther used to tumble out of his snug nest and tumble into his clothes in the freezing dark, sleepily and unwillingly, but without waste of time; there was no temptation to dawdle in that Arctic temperature. He habitually slept in his

underwear, so that dressing was merely a matter of boots and trousers and the sleeved woollen vest his mother knitted for him every winter and the coat over it, which all together made up his cold-weather outfit. Already, as he clumped thunderously down the narrow, boxed-in staircase where every sound augmented in volume by some occult law of acoustics, the acrid odour of kindlings catching fire was stealing through the partitions. His mother was efficiently slamming doors and dampers around the stove; the brief, inarticulate sound of greeting she made merged indistinguishably into a reminder to hustle with the water. It was Luther's first early-morning duty to thaw out the wash-house pump, pouring down it through an aperture in the top a delicate trickle of water from the supply they kept from freezing over night in a bucket on the kitchen hearth. This required experience and discretion, water was so valuable a commodity. Luther poured little by little and worked the handle; while he worked and poured he could hear his father knocking about in the stable, and the hollow stamping of hoofs, and the harness jingling and slapping on the horses' backs. Gleams of light from the stable lantern came and went intermittently through the frost-whitened window like the transient fires within an opal; and all at once a shapeless silhouette obscured the panes, moving restlessly, and was presently reinforced by other opaque and cloudy figures, with outcry of plaintive sharpness.

"Want in? Aw' ri', I'll let you in d'reckly. Yeh, you're cold, I know. Think you're th' on'y cold ones 'round here? You kin just wait now; we need water more'n we need cats," said Luther, pausing to sniff and pass his sleeve under his nose. Still waggling the pump-handle with one hand, he scratched a peep-hole through

the skim of frost with his finger-nail, and after some aimless commotion, a small muzzle appeared there and then an eye with a bright, vertical pupil glaring steadily. The miauing recommenced with increased vigor, and Luther mimicked it resoundingly.

"Loot! You quit foolin' with them cats, less'n you aim t' go without any breakfast!"

"I ain't doin' nothin'."

"Yeah, that's no lie! Got that water started or can't you? I should come and do it, shouldn't I? All I got to do is wait on dumkopfs!" But by that time the pump was flowing freely, and the fire was burning full head on, and a pleasant aroma of boiling coffee spread abroad. And when the cats bounced in over the window-sill, making little contented grating noises in their throats, with their fur all standing out and crackling electrically, Mrs. Alvin, in the midst of her bustling and loud hectoring talk, took a moment to set out a pan of warmed milk for them. Alvin came in, with a rush of cold air; his very clothes seemed to exhale the cold together with smells of the horses and of hay and leather. Market mornings he and Luther had no time for the milking; Mrs. Nichols attended to that later. When she happened to have a day off Lizzie helped, but ordinarily she must leave the house at six o'clock in order to reach the Pike, a half-mile walk, and catch the station 'bus. She emerged from the front room, ready for the journey with her coat on, and a crocheted Shetland-wool fascinator to tie over her head and ears. The table was drawn up within arms' length of the stove, partly for warmth, partly so that the coffee-pot and the skillet of fried salt pork and potatoes could be gotten at handily; it was a cozy interior which Luther, for one, was not anxious to abandon for the high, hard seat of

the wagon, and two or three hours of rocking over frozen ruts—but business is business.

"You got a nice, big lot of schmier-käse for today, I guess?" said Alvin, addressing his wife, with the whole of one side of his leathery countenance drawn into a laboured wink.

"Yeah, th' milk it gets clabber right away quick this kind of weather, so you should make cheese easy!" Mrs. Alvin retorted in a similar vein of jocose irony. Lizzie contributed her mite to the badinage. "Loot's sorry!" she observed. "Ain't you, Loot? Feel terrible bad?"

"Sure!"

"That's all right, Lootie, some day you'll wisht you didn't have nothin' harder'n holdin' onto a crock of cheese f'r a spell, an' stand on market too. Oh my, such work! And then you come home and I should have spëtzla all nice and hot so you eat till you bust. Oh my, such bad times you have!" his mother said—perhaps shouted would be more accurately descriptive, for all this family give-and-take went on, as has been hinted, without much attention to what teachers of singing term voice-placement, while everybody champed industriously on the comforting hot viands. Mrs. Nichols's cooking measured up to the most exacting Deercreek standards, so that it was a stock joke on the Pike to commiserate the young women whom the Nichols boys might select for mates. They'd have their job cut out for them, trying to beat her spëtzla, or whatever! Luther, however, was not thinking of girls yet; he ate steadily, his mind fixed on the long drive into town; his brain of a sleepy young animal could scarcely compass even that effort. Actually, he merely sensed in advance the stinging wind against his face, the motion

of the wagon, the creeping numbness in his fingers, the welcome smells of the market street—fish, cellars, thawing mud, stale beer. He hoped the frost-bitten place on his heel would not begin to itch; when it did it was maddening, he had all he could do not to tear everything off of it and scratch, scratch to the very bone. He withdrew his feet from the warm area around the stove with a nervous movement, fancying he felt premonitory symptoms.

"That cold-sore start up?" his mother asked at once in quick and unerring sympathy. "You should wait till I rub some lard into it good. That stops it. Huh? Yeah, you have so got time, Poppa. That don't take a minute, nor eat no bread. A horse you would fix up, ain't it? Boys too, why not?"

This was sound reasoning, and Alvin grumblingly acquiesced. When the roads were icy, he was wont to tie up the hoofs of his team in bags of burlaps to insure their foot-hold. A horse with a broken leg is neither more nor less than a dead horse, as far as his future usefulness is concerned; the fracture will not knit dependably, if at all. Alvin could not afford such a loss; but the preventive measure, like many another on a farm, primarily one of plain thrift and prudence, acquired in years of practice a quality of kindliness; to live much with animals makes men humane. He went out now and thoughtfully studied the ground, holding the lantern down to it; the survey ended by his fetching the burlaps; no use taking chances, was his argument. Luther's treatment was finished presently, and he came to help. A red crack in the eastern sky was widening as they slung the feed-bag and the lantern under the rear axle, and climbed to the seat.

## II

The Nichols stand was just a few steps from the intersection of Western Avenue and Pine Street, and therefore cornerwise from that end of the market-house—a well-chosen location. They were on the edge of the ceaseless current of Pine Street trolley-cars without being incommoded by it; and at the same time that the proletariat with its baskets arrived by this means of transportation, another class known to market-standers as the swell North Hill trade, driving in town from that handsome suburb, parked their motors only a square farther up at Poplar Street, so that Alvin's was one of the first displays they came to, entering market. This was no fortuitous piece of luck, still less the dispensation of a favorable Providence; the Nichols couple had schemed, juggled, all but fought for their place, though now it had been theirs so many years by the uncodified laws obtaining on market, that nobody dreamed of disputing their right to it. For that matter, there was a certain solidarity of spirit and action amongst the Deercreek market-standers, taking precedence of internecine difference; they were banded together against the common enemy, the city official. Periodically, the powers represented by the latter set on foot a movement to exact payment of rent for standing-space—ten—twelve—fifteen dollars a month. It would be ruin! Where was the money for that extortionate toll to come from, with taxes and the road-assessment, and cholera among the chickens, and nothing but bull-calves this spring, and

tomatoes only seventy-five cents a bushel, and the rest of the truck burned out with the drought, or washed out with the rains? What kind of a life was it, farming, anyhow? "If you have it a good season with lots to sell then everybody else's got it too, so you don't get nothin'," said Mrs. Alvin sourly. "And if it's bad, then you don't get nothin' to sell! And on top of that we should pay to stand on market yet! The hucksters they got to have a license because they drive round an' wear out th' roads, I guess? And th' ones that stand inside the market-house, they gotta pay, that's all right. But we should pay to be out takin' th' weather for a nickle a bunch radishes, huh? Pay, pay, pay all th' time! So they can have some good times. They get th' money outa us, but they don't never tell us where it goes to. Grafters!" Her neighbours growled gloomy assent. Black Care rode to and fro on the wagons, crouched by every pillow. But invariably the nefarious measure went to defeat; whatever the way in which the opposition of these embattled farmers made itself felt, it was always too strong for the quirites. There were not wanting those who whispered around that Jack Dalton the well-known "leader" of Labour and perhaps other forces, Jack Dalton of the Thirteenth Ward, had something to do with it; in a little hole of a room up Liver Alley behind Metznauer's Place, he turned the urns of fate, exercising a mysterious influence over councilmen and it might be even higher authorities.

Young Luther troubled himself little enough about such matters, however; up to this date he had always had all he wanted to eat and drink and wear, in spite of disquieting prophecies, and if, after a year or so, standing on market began to seem less of a privilege,

and more of a task, he still had no fault to find with it. He had no fault to find with any circumstance of his life, even with the spectacle of other people who in all likelihood lived better, and at any rate lived differently, before his eyes during an endless succession of Wednesdays and Saturdays. Luther was quite incapable of picturing how they lived even if he had been interested enough to try. To be sure he learned under the elder Nichols' tutelage, the principles of the science of marketing, which included necessarily some study of customers singly and in the mass; it would have been called salesmanship in loftier circles. There were some nice points; as that "coloured" would pay any price, and could safely be asked any price irrespective of ethics, but that nevertheless too much of their patronage was not desirable; that tenement-house ladies might be identified by their bare or shawled heads and the children tagging along, and were in general easy to sell to, on account of being in a hurry what with the work at home and the children and everything; that some people made a practice of coming late Saturdays, expecting bargains, and should be met with an equally shrewd diplomacy; that club-stewards bought so liberally, it was wise to "throw off" for them—not too much, of course; and that with the swell North Hill trade—whose hall-marks must be carefully studied—nothing was so profitable as getting up a reputation for a specialty, be it sauerkraut, schnittlach, apple-butter or what you choose. All this lore Luther imbibed through constant precept and example; but it took time. If not precisely slow or shy and certainly not timid, he still lacked some salesmen's endowment of initiative or resource. He was unresponsive, and let many a customer escape whom a show of interest or merely of an amiable willingness to serve

might have held. Alvin and Hilda Nichols themselves were not too adept in this branch of the tradesman's art. Manners or manner had no place in their curriculum, and if they made no more of Luther than an honest young lout, it was because they themselves were no more than honest old ones.

As the business of the market-stand was conducted on a strictly cash basis, Luther never needed any acquaintance with commercial usage relating to outstanding accounts or bills receivable. The unwritten Nichols manual contained no advice about whom to trust and whom not to trust; one sweeping injunction covered every case, viz: trust nobody! Their bank was the pocket of Alvin's breeches, or of Mrs. Hilda's red flannel underskirt, supplemented for convenience by a cigar-box for the smallest coins of which Luther was given charge. Never to make change for a stranger, never to ask or allow a stranger to make change for him, never to leave the money on the stand or unpoliced for a second, never to accept a deposit on account, or let a patron carry away so much as a turnip without payment, upon whatever excuse—these were fundamentals Luther acquired so early that to all intents and purposes he had been born with them, as with the instinct to eat when he was hungry and sleep when night came. At his end of the stand, he presided over the onions, the green peppers, the bunches of dried soup-herbs, and such other minor vegetables as were sold in small quantities, and mainly for relishes; and with the cigar-box under his hand dealt out and received by dribs, not infrequently finishing up the day with a weighty horde of nothing but coppers. His father or his mother when some stress of farm work obliged Alvin to remain at home, officiated amongst the chickens and the drawers of fruit for

preserving; the butter and eggs they disposed of to a commission house or to the general grocery with whose proprietor they had an agreement. "Times back you used to could sell butter right outa th' tub," Alvin told his son. "But not now. Not since th' fancy creamerymen started to put it up in them wax-paper bricks. Everybody wants it stylish now for everything, an' then th' Health Office they're always nosin' round too."

"Uh-huh," said Luther stolidly, in preoccupation. "Did you say th' grass two f'r a quarter, Pop? Cuz them ginnys, them Baccigalupos gettin' fifteen cents straight f'r theirs." On Luther's tongue the name became Batchygloopo, a pronunciation which, when all's said, may emulate the Italian as nearly as is possible even for those of us who pretend to a much closer acquaintance with it; and his "grass" was a diminutive *à la mode* Deercreek and Western Avenue, for asparagus. "They ain't no bigger bunches 'n ours either," he added.

"How many y'r maw she have you t' put to 'em?"

"She said f'r t' put nine o' these here little slim stocks, 'n' one big, thick one, see?"

Alvin saw, and turned his chew of tobacco and spat in the gutter, cogitating. "Well, 's all right," he said finally. "You kin keep on two f'r a quarter, on'y mind you always say three f'r thirty-five when they stop t' look, long 's it's Sat'day. Most of 'em figger they can't do with just th' one bunch, 'n' three f'r thirty-five's better 'n' two f'r thirty, with mebbe Sunday comp'ny comin' in. Or else they kin squeeze along on two f'r a quarter, 'n' save th' nickle. That's how they figger, mostly."

This would be on one of the May mornings when marketing recaptured some of its first flavor of novelty

and high adventure. Over night it was chilly, but a sky of soft clouds and drifts of cottony mist in the hollows warded off frost. Moisture beaded all the shingles; the pastures and bits of woodland, the "front yard" itself, actually unkempt, took on the gracious semblance of city parks, the grass still short and dense and freshly green, and the weeds not yet in growth. Driving, the sun came up and warmed their backs kindly; the horses trotted with a certain spirit; sometimes a rabbit scudded across the road; in every barnyard a new colt or a new calf would be ready to charge down to the fence and fling an awkward caracole as they passed. Luther, like these other young creatures, experienced a physical elation; he wanted to whoop, but capers, shy stones, but peremptory personalities from his seniors curbed him. "Here, Mister Loot, if you got time t' throw sticks f'r Spot t' chase after, you got time t' slop them pigs, I guess. Can't you do nothin' 'thout somebody's after you, every minute? Looks like you ain't ever goin' t' grow up, or get good sense!" The exhortations were likely to be couched in a much more flavourous vocabulary than this excerpt would indicate, but Luther was nowise offended or cast down; he took the bucket and went whistling off to the pig-slopping, unconsciously gracing that super-homely performance by his natural jauntiness of movement and carriage.

All the way into town they would be overhauling or being overhauled by other Deercreek residents; it was a caravan of covered wagons, the wheels mantled with dust or mud, baskets protruding at the rear, crated poultry rustling and cheeping uneasily. Invariably a weather-hardened octogenarian—who was probably not a day over forty!—a man in a blue denim shirt, or a

woman in a sunbonnet, conducted the equipage from the seat in front with a spry lieutenant alongside, some cockerel like Luther, or perhaps a hobble-de-hoy of a girl, near his age. The elders shouted greetings, the others merely grinned if of the same sex; if not they exchanged a glower incurious and half hostile or at least antagonistic. These were the only social moments of the trip; conversation on the wagons was confined to monosyllables most of the time, or words of command to the horses, although once in a while Luther's father would utter brief comment.

"What's th' matter side o' Roy's face under his eye there? Looks like he run into somepin' 'n' hurt it."

"Naw, it's where his paw hit him."

Alvin made an inarticulate sound conveying in some fashion all its own at once disapproval and a guarded neutrality. Under cross-examination he would have averred that what other folks did was none of his business; nor rack nor thumbscrews could have got any more definite expression of opinion out of him, yet a potent distaste for Roy's paw's methods of correction somehow made itself manifest whether or no. Alvin believed in discipline for children; he had himself felt the weight of the parental rod in youth, and had administered it in his turn unflinchingly. But it is one thing to chastise a boy decently upon the prescribed corporal surfaces with a strap or a shingle or eke the open palm sanctioned by ancient custom, and it is another to hammer him around with a blow here and a kick there. Such practice is not academic; Alvin found it invincibly repugnant; but all he said was: "Roy's gettin' kinda growed-up f'r his paw t' take 'n' lick him."

"Aw, he didn't. He can't lick Roy no more—not like he useta, I mean. He just got mad 'n' hit him, 'n'

busted his cheek open, 'n' Roy kinda let him. Cuz he was drunk, y'know."

"Hungh!" said Alvin, grunting again.

"Roy don't never like f'r t' hit his paw back when th' ol' man's drunk," Luther explained further. "He just lets him rip roun' till he gits tired 'n' kinda quiets down."

"Hungh!"

Upon their arrival, Luther, after helping unload, took the wagon and team to Schulte's Livery and Feed-Store down by the Fifteenth Street bridge over the Canal. Emil Schulte was a distant cousin on the Nagel side of the house, and in consideration of that fact "threw off" from his regular charges for stall-room; nothing else was needed in the way of accommodation, for Nichols brought his own supply of horse-feed, and Luther watered and waited on the animals. The country boy was a handy groom; not one of Schulte's could teach Luther much about horse-flesh. Once indeed he and one of the stablemen, bantered and backed up by the rest, entered into a harnessing contest, and Schulte himself came and held a stop-watch on them, while first one and then the other hitched up and unhitched a double team. Luther won by a handsome margin, something like eighty seconds, and the head of the establishment bestowed on him Olympian approval and the latter-day equivalent of the parsley-wreath, a powerful Wheeling stogie, which the victor smoked with calamitous results. But that was later; at the moment Luther, who had been boastful and cocksure enough in the middle of the circle of stable hands, feeling that he could bandy blasphemies and obscenities with the best of them, and knew more and handled a horse better and, in fine, went down deeper and came up drier than any youth of his size

and years known to history—Luther was submerged in embarrassment at his august relative's notice.

"'S all right, son!" said the latter, benevolently cutting short his stammering acknowledgments. "You beat him fair and square, and 'tain't so easy with a coupla strange horses, and everybody rootin' for the other fellow, and hollerin' and kiddin' so's to get you up in the air. You done first-rate. Mebbe some day when you get a little older and come round here I might have a job for you—if these here ottemobiles don't run all the livery-men outa business before then!"

Mr. Schulte was something of a sporting character; he never drove except in an emergency, but sat all day long in the little office with the battered desk on which his feet were generally propped, and the calendar and the cuspidor, answering the telephone, or studying the racing form-sheet, or trimming his nails with a penknife, or entertaining other sporting gentlemen like himself, always with one of those formidable stogies clenched in the corner of his mouth; it never made *him* sick. He wore a collar and shirt and shoes all the time, not merely when he was dressed up for Sunday; he knew Jack Dalton; he went to the races and bet; Luther thought him a very great man second only to the President and Christy Matthewson. In fact, Emil made money at the livery business, if that be a test of greatness; notwithstanding his man-of-leisure air, he kept a firm grip and a keenly observant eye on affairs at Fifteenth and the Canal. Behind the office there were long, dim, high arcades of stalls separated by aisles, these for horses, those for vehicles; farther back still there opened out a desultory arrangement of alleys, cobble-stoned courtyards where the colored stable-helpers were forever washing down a horse or a carriage, and

wooden buildings, mostly of one story used for storage, box-stalls, harness-rooms and what-not. A non-professional visitor came away with confused impressions of the smell of ammonia, glimpses of cobwebs, nickle-plated buckles, motes and dust dancing in long rifts of sunlight, the rumps of horses, and sounds of munching and of flies buzzing. The czar, Schulte, knew every foot of this disordered domain, the capacity of every horse, the upkeep of every vehicle, the worth of every man; moreover—and possibly it was of equal importance—he knew his clientele which he considered and frequently stated to be of a gratifyingly "nifty" character—that is, responsible and prompt in payment; his fixed purpose was to keep it so or to increase its niftiness. It will be seen that Emil was a good business-man, loud clothes, loud tastes, loud company and all. To be like him, to attain similar heights, were the first aspirations that visited Luther; he kept them secret, they seemed so far-fetched and romantic. Even that half-way promise of a job he discounted; it was rather too good to come true, especially qualified by the clause about when he "got a little older" which might mean any time or no time, Luther decided with naïve sagacity.

Market was in full swing when he got back to Western Avenue between seven and eight o'clock. The early morning crowds were drawn from the tenements and boarding- and rooming-houses roundabout augmented by an army of salespeople and clerks who, however, did not count in Luther's estimation though the street-cars and sidewalks were thick with them. They were on the way down town to the department-stores, the warehouses and office-buildings where they worked, and save for occasional purchases of bananas, candy, wienerwürst, or like eatables in which the Nichols family took

no interest, could not be classed as marketeers at all. Later on, about eleven, the buyers for the clubs and hotels and restaurants with here and there a dining-car steward in search of some novelty, pervaded the street; towards noon the family trade arrived whether in carriages or by the trolley, and perforce wound its way through market on foot, exhibiting those idiosyncrasies of behaviour in which Luther had been schooled. There were the women who priced everything on the stand—and then passed on without buying; the others who stopped and fingered and smelled and sampled, assuring you meanwhile that they didn't want anything, they were just looking; the ones who went the entire round of market, both sides of the street, before they could make up their minds, and the ones who bought at the first stand; the middle-aged housekeepers who agonized over an extra cent, the young brides who would buy a quart of spinach unless warned by Mrs. Alvin that it "cooked up" to no more than a tablespoonful. Luther knew them all, and came off fairly well from the encounters. It was the busiest and most trying hour of the day.

Standing sentry over the cigar-box, he had next him on one side the Zettels, then the Piepers, then the McArdles, all Deercreek neighbors, then a set of recent importations from the old country known along the Pike as "them Hunkies"; they were swarthy, gypsy-looking men and women, undersized but strongly built, jabbering uncouth sounds among themselves, but one and all already displaying an amazing fluency in English. Hitherto Deercreek had viewed them rather askant, but doubtless they would win tolerance and recognition in time; Luther, glancing down the line, could see Roy McArdle exchanging some friendly word with one of the

Hunkie girls, a strapping, good-natured piece who not improbably was making inquiry about the black-and-blue swelling under his eye, for her own eyes were fixed on it, and she nodded and grinned sympathetically, while the older McArdle's back was turned as he lowered among his potatoes. The Mayers had the first stand on Luther's other hand; a species of hiatus occurred at this point, created by the tyrannical ruling of those same city fathers—whom might the gods confound!—that nobody should obstruct access to the fire-hose plug; then came the Baccigalupos, whose social rating approximated that of the late immigrants. Nobody knew where their farm was, if they had one; the laws of nature forbade their raising their figs and melons in the Ohio valley. But with the diabolical penetration of their race they had discovered the organic principle of catering to the swell North Hill trade, with whom they were making a specialty of those fruits with enviable success.

Luther had been pricked to a certain curiosity about these "ginneys" not by their picturesque ways and appearance which of himself he would never have noticed, but because he had been taken for one of them; it argued a resemblance which set him to observing them and making wondering and, strange to say, not ill-pleased comparisons. The thing conferred distinction; nobody else on market could by any possibility be taken for a "ginny." The oldest Baccigalupo boy—there must have been a dozen children, every one of them down to the six-year-old latest arrival, active at the stand, eager, obliging and vivacious—joked Luther endlessly about it, choosing his shafts with Latin precocity and true Latin taste. "Dass all ri', Lootie, you don' gif a damn-a eef dat chicken sink you dago, eh? She anyway look-a you, eh? Ah-h, sush blue eye! Ah-h, my heart-a!" And here Tony

would clap his hand to the left side of his ribs with unabashed melodramatic fervor. "Dass all ri' for *you,* Lootie, you mak-a one 'it wiz her, eh?"

"Aw, you quit!" Luther mumbled, feeling hot to the ears and foolish, yet somehow tickled; he found it impossible to get angry with the Italians, their merriment was so sympathetic, they were so frankly, engagingly and light-heartedly salacious in their suggestions, as if amorous intrigue were the most matter-of-course and taken-for-granted business on earth. He never let his father overhear their teasing; the elder Nichols, on whom the incident that gave rise to it had made scarcely any impression except one of contemptuous surprise, would have been scandalized. According to Alvin all that happened was that two young people, a boy about Luther's age, and a girl perhaps a year or so behind him, came up to the stand in a hurry one day just before closing time and asked for nutmeg melons. Luther waited on them, and they selected two and were paying for them when the girl said: "You're the Italians, aren't you?"

"Huh?" said Luther blankly.

"Aren't you the Italians? I don't know what the name is, but the ones that have the good melons?"

Luther stared at her, his mind struggling to formulate two or three thoughts at once. She was taking him for somebody else—nevertheless she had bought the melons—but she might want her money back—maybe he ought to give it back—! "Huh?" he ejaculated again, helplessly. Some sub-conscious faculty recorded the fact to be afterwards recalled under the stimulus of Tony's hints, that she had large, odd, green-gray eyes, and a tremendous crop of flaxen hair, and a very fine, transparent complexion; perhaps an ordinarily pretty girl she

became a goddess, a Venus with eminently Venus-like attributes, after Tony's interpretation; he had a sure sense of values.

The green eyes, on their side, scrutinized him, unembarrassed. "You aren't? Why, you look just like one!"

"Well, I ain't—I ain't any Eyetalian, I mean. I'm United States," Luther stuttered. "Them mushmelons is all right, though," he added desperately. The Nichols scheme of conduct interdicted any sort of comparison, open or implied, between fellow market-standers' goods, let alone "knocking" one's competitors. "They've anyhow got to make their living, too, ain't it?" Mrs. Alvin said. It was an application of the Golden Rule which resulted in their standing on market as if in a great void, neither "knocking" nor recommending. Luther might have directed his customers to the Baccigalupos, but ethics did not require that much of him. At any rate, he had no chance, for the couple began to laugh, and the boy, gathering up the fruit, said it was all right, anyhow.

"Mother'll never know the difference, and we wouldn't have either, if you hadn't said that." He looked at Luther, awkwardly apologetic.

"I don't care, he *does* look as Italian as can be," said the girl, and she too gave Luther a quick glance but one of mischief, challenge and defiance. "You don't mind, do you?" She appealed to him with a defeating confidence.

"Me? Sure! I—I mean sure *not*—I mean——" Luther blurted in an agony of bashfulness; and while he was still blundering incoherently, she and her brother walked off, laughing together. Tony Baccigalupo, witnessing the last of this little scene, easily enough patched out the rest with the additions and decorations which as has been said, Luther denounced in public, and privately

relished. He kept a furtive look-out for the green-eyed girl for some time, but she never came again, and bye-and-bye faded from his memory.

By three o'clock in the afternoon market was empty even of the last bēlated stragglers, and everybody was packing up to go home. Underfoot the street was an ugly raffle of papers, rags, strings, waste garden-stuff, bits of offal and indescribable rubbish, diversified with abhorent puddles where disaster had befallen somebody's eggs or buttermilk. Sometimes it rained, cementing the whole into one incredibly evil smelling muck; sometimes the squalid landscape withered under a midsummer sun. Luther brought the team around; he generally drove going home, while his father figured toilsomely with a thick stubbed pencil in his thick, stubbed fingers, casting up the day's results. A vast fatigue settled upon Luther's spirit and body; he drooped with nodding head, the reins all but escaping from his limp grasp. The horses needed no guidance; they went along at their slouching trot. The way seemed interminable, yet it never took so long going home as it did driving into town in the mornings, a phenomenon which Luther often pondered without ever arriving at any explanation of it. Always at the same place, the top of the big hill, his father slapped the notebook together and stuck it with the much-licked pencil into his hip-pocket and took the reins, clucking to the horses. And always as they passed her house, he said: "Well, I *will!* If Mis' Blossmeyer ain't got her wash out!"

This wash of Mrs. Blossmeyer's was a by-word along the Pike, the ultimate instance of laziness and unthrift; every day was laundry-day with her, yet apparently she could not get through, make an end. The wash came out piecemeal, and as she had no line, or lacked the en-

terprise to put one up and prop it, the picket-fence, the currant-bushes even, some people said, the chicken-coops were sempiternally hung with drying articles, a shirt here, a towel there. Deercreek felt that the spectacle was at once grotesque and indecorous.

"I bet she eats her meals that same way—cup of coffee once, an' mebbe another time a slice o' jelly-bread, standin' up somewhere. I bet she don't ever set no table," Alvin said, eyeing the exhibition with humourous disfavor. "Well, lucky it's none of our business th' way other folks keep house, Mis' Blossmeyer ner nobody else. We gotta git inta that corn pretty soon, Loot, er it'll git ahead of us."

## III

The McArdles had a dreary little run-down farm in the Deercreek district, a mile or so from Alvin Nichols. There were only some ten or twelve acres of it, all on a hill-side sloping towards the southwest; the whole place had at one time been a vineyard with a substantial yearly yield. But that was within the recollection only of the oldest settlers along the Pike; it must be a good half-century since growing grapes ceased to be a profitable industry in the Ohio Valley. Agricultural wiseacres explained its disappearance with ample phrases about erosion and the climatic changes incident to cutting away the forests and diverting or damaging the natural water-supply; but all that Deercreek Pike knew was that nobody had grapes any more, unless it might be a few old stocks that were on the place when Paw, or perhaps Grampaw, bought it years ago.

David McArdle's hillside now bore neither grapes, nor much of anything else, though the soil was said to be fairly good still, needing only a little liming and fertilizing; cultivation it got, of a sort, for David was an experienced husbandman and a most furious worker—at intervals; he was also one of those silent and unsociable hard drinkers who are seldom entirely sober, yet never entirely drunk. Bordering on both conditions most of the time, he yet managed somehow to make a living on the farm; but that was all. It was going to ruin; the fence-posts were down or leaning askew, the old roofs sagged; there was not a whole gate, door, chimney, win-

dow, floor amongst all the farm buildings. Chickens roosted in the ramshackle tool-shed on the plough and grindstone and the shafts of the market-wagon. The pump had broken down so long ago that Roy could not remember ever having seen it in use, though it still stood rotting and rusting and handleless in the middle of the unstable platform over the well; they moved a board and let down a bucket when they wanted water. Indoors the collective feminine mind of Deercreek shuddered to imagine what the state of things might be; scarcely anyone had ever seen it, for the older McArdle scowlingly and sullenly discouraged social advances. But to judge by the outside, what horrors in bedding and kitchen-utensils, what abominations of dirt and disorder and neglect, the two-roomed shanty must harbour!

The McArdle father and son had lived there by themselves, keeping house after their undoubtedly bloodcurdling masculine fashion ever since Mrs. McArdle's death when Roy was about nine. Now he was twice that age, a big muscular young fellow with thick, rough, tow-coloured hair, a fair skin sunburned to brick red, and candid blue eyes with which he directed upon the world a very frank, amiable, and sometimes wistfully perplexed look; in the opinion of the community at large, Roy's intellectual gifts were not such as would ever set any considerable body of water on fire, but people would always hasten to qualify that statement by another to the effect that the poor boy had never had any chance, and that it was a wonder he had turned out—so far—no worse. Roy went about in cheerful ignorance of these pronouncements; he had no idea of pitying himself. To be sure his father beat and bullied him and worked him hard; but theirs was not the only home on the Pike where fathers carried themselves thus towards sons.

And to be sure his education was sadly limited, owing to an irregular and desultory attendance at school; but when did any boy ever resent *that?* Roy did not even resent the paternal squanderings of money mainly earned by himself on drink, while their clothes went to rags, their boots all but dropped off, and the house tumbled down over their heads. He did not lack spirit: it simply never occurred to him to dispute his father's prerogatives any more than it would have occurred to Sport, their old dog. Quite by chance when he was sixteen and developing fast, in fending off an attack one day, he knocked the older man down and stunned him and made his nose bleed—a by no means regrettable outcome to the one-sided quarrel, upon which in all conscience he might have congratulated himself. But Roy stood over the other astounded to discover the weight of his own muscles, and shocked and vicariously humbled. He knew in that moment that he need never fear another beating, no matter what he did; the sceptre had passed from the tyrant's hand to his own, but that certainty did not make a tyrant of him in turn. Roy took no satisfaction in overpowering and mistreating a drunken man; the opportunity for revenge held out no attractions for him. It was impossible that he should feel any respect or affection for his father, but neither did he feel any enmity; and, whatever he had felt, the strong sense of fairness would have governed him. He got David—who came to, cursing and perfectly unchastened and more than eager to get at him again!—on his feet, dodging his loosely aimed blows, and shut the door on him and went off, leaving him to drink himself stupid, or if the bottle were empty, to sleep off what he had already drunk; Roy was philosophically indifferent on that point.

The scene with minor differences was repeated at frequent intervals during the next year or two, like the recurrent theme with variations of some musical compositions. If the elder McArdle realized that at any moment his son could be his master and might choke him to death or at the least hammer him into insensibility in their grapples, he was still too settled in his habits to abandon them. Perhaps with the cunning of his brutality, he traded on Roy's phlegmatic patience; but most probably no emotion or purpose or recollection could lodge long enough in that dismantled brain to be in any wise effective. As time went on, the old wretch's sodden body likewise began to fail; it became increasingly easier for Roy to manage him—that is, to evade his uncertain fists and missiles and pen him up in safety. "Pop can't throw real good any more. He's got th' funniest motion to his arm—like wimmen! Y' can't tell where th' rock or whatever is goin' t' land!" the young fellow reported, not without a grin. "He misses me a mile every time. An' when he starts one o' his rushes, I just kinda side-step, 'n' mebbe stick my foot out 'n' ——" He made a gesture of finality. "'S all over! I try t' let him down easy when I trip him that way, on'y of course he does sometimes fetch up ker-bim inta th' door-jamb or somethin' an' raises a welt on his head. It don't hurt him any t' speak of. That's gen'ally when I make my getaway."

"I've always heard it couldn't kill a man that's drunk lettin' him fall."

"Yeah, me too. I guess it's so, if Pop's anythin' to go by. He's fell enough times—— Gee!" said Roy, with conviction. After a meditative moment he added: "I think he's gettin' these here what they call d.t.'s now. You get 'em 'f you keep hittin' th' booze long enough,

y' know. He had a spell th' other night, hollerin' 'bout things he saw."

Luther looked at him with a faintly envious curiosity. Since the earliest days of a friendship which had begun almost before either one of them was old enough to speak plainly, the boy who had a good home and upright, temperate, industrious parents who did their whole duty by him, had been thrilled and intrigued by the wild environment in which the other's life was lived. It had the allurement of the forbidden, and threw a glamour around Roy himself as possessing superior and most gruesome knowledge. Of course, as he grew up, Luther discarded these nonsensical notions; he no longer admired the bumps and bruises which had once seemed such interesting exhibitions of Roy's father's prowess; the decaying farm, the worthless brute, were as grim and repugnant facts to Luther as to everybody else. Nevertheless this last development was so sensational as to provoke a desire to be in Roy's boots for once, and see what it felt like; life on Deercreek Pike provided few excitements.

"They ack crazy, don't they? Did he say what he saw? I mean snakes or anything?" he asked in eager anticipation.

Roy nodded placidly. "On that order. I couldn't make out all what he was sayin'. 'Tain't natural talk like you 'n' I, y'know—it's sorta jabber," he explained carefully and circumstantially; Roy was always truthful; even the other's delighted horror, and obvious readiness to believe could not lead him into exaggerations. "First off I thought he was just actin' up, t' scare me, er mebbe git me mad. But d'reckly I seen he couldn't help it. I kep' tellin' him he needn't t' mind, I wouldn't let nothin' hurt him, but he didn't pay no

'tention any more 'n' 'f I hadn't been there—went right on hollerin' 'n' shakin'."

"Gee! What'd you *do?*"

"Why, after a while, I just let up 'n' didn't do nothin'. No use. N' bineby it kinda wore off—th' fit, er whatever it is. He went t' sleep—on'y he'd kinda groan 'n' jerk all over ev'y little while, but I guessed that didn't signify. I guessed he was gittin' over it. Sure 'nough next morning seemed like he was all right, cussin' roun' same as ever, 'n' didn't even remember nothin' 'bout it!"

"Don't you s'pose he'll have another, though, some time?"

"Wouldn't wonder."

This news getting about, the entire Pike, at a pleasurable tension, awaited David McArdle's next seizure—and the next, until the sensation staled, passing the nine days' boundary. It became an accepted fact that no longer aroused interest or speculation, except once in a while, as to how long he would last; and he lasted incredibly, impossibly! How Roy contrived, nobody knew; he never seemed to be in straits, or at least never asked for help. He literally never thought of it. According to Roy's lights, things were no worse than they had always been, perhaps in some aspects actually a little better; for his father grew less and less capable of withstanding him physically, and often with a threat or a shake he could cow the older man into submission and inaction, and go about the business of the farm and house unmolested. But had it been otherwise, Roy still would never have dreamed of enlisting outsiders; it was not the way of the country and he had no precedent to follow. In town, half a dozen charitable organizations, social workers, juvenile-court officials, humanitarians of

every brand, would long since have reported the case, and taken action on it; but on the Pike, the pioneer spirit survived in a sturdy endurance of and reticence about one's own individual hardships and those of the neighbours. In the country, poverty and suffering may at least have the main easement that is denied them in town, privacy; and the feeling that a man's house is his castle may be when all's said and done, the very marrow of the moral benefit that ownership confers.

As luck would have it, David was marked out to give the public one final, lurid, melodramatic moment yet, before the curtain went down on his sordid career. It was on a hot June night that one of the Hagedorn boys —Ben Hagedorn's place was across the road from the Nichols', and being farther up the rise of the big hill commanded a much more extensive view—came storming to the door, breathless and almost voiceless with excitement and the distance he had run. Fire! McArdles'! Fire! The whole house was blazing up! They could see it plain as plain from their porch!

Fire! Everybody turned out in frantic haste: and up and down the Pike there were racing and screaming, half-dressed people, market-wagons clattering, tired plow-horses sweated to a gallop, hullabaloo, hubbub and chaos. They got there in time to save the live-stock—most of the animals on account of the heat had been left loose grazing in the fields, or rather along the roadside which was McArdle's pasture-land, people always said. But everything else went—went like tinder, barn, sheds, tools, house and all; wherever a spark landed on one of the dry old roofs was a roaring furnace the next minute. Roy had dragged his father out and to a place of safety before anybody reached them, getting badly scorched himself in doing so; he told them afterwards

that hearing a noise as if some varmint had got in among the chickens, he had gone out to see about it, leaving the other lying on the bed—whether asleep or in one of his spells, Roy did not say, and the audience humanely refrained from asking though everyone suspected the latter. At any rate, when he came back, he found the oil lamp which he kept on a shelf by the bed overturned and the whole of that corner of the room in a blaze, his father unconscious or in some strange state approximating unconsciousness, with the flames already singeing his beard. He might have knocked the lamp over, or it might have been jarred off the bracket by some other movement around the house; everything was old, shaky and ready to fall down at a touch; but whatever it was that had happened no one would ever know, for David died about two o'clock that morning on the horse-blanket out in the clover-patch where Roy had carried and laid him, without ever speaking or knowing anyone or coming out of the coma—to give it the doctor's name.

So there was poor Roy not only deprived of his parent, in conscience and common-sense no great loss nor much to be deplored, but practically deprived of his patrimony too—and *that* was no light matter. You cannot farm and raise crops and stand on market without first purveying yourself some sort of shelter and equipment. Robinson Crusoe found that out, and he was scarcely in worse case than Roy, who had the clothes he stood in, a spavined team, a cow and calf, and a hive of bees which everyone had been afraid to handle and which, by a triumphant irony, came through absolutely unscathed! There was the farm, to be sure, but how was he to run it? The June taxes were not even paid, yet. They never were paid, as a matter of fact;

he had to let the place go, and Jake Steinmetz came along and bought it for next to nothing at sheriff's sale, four or five years later.

In the meanwhile Roy, as usual, managed somehow, without recourse to the good-will of others, though he must have stood in need of it, even of their active charity, more than once. He had been managing somehow all of his brief life, ever since he was a little chap stoically taking a flogging from his father, and going out to milk afterwards. Work was plentiful during the summer when every farmer is busy and short-handed; when the slack season came on, he went in town and essayed several jobs—driving a milk wagon for the Western Avenue Dairy Products Company, clerking in a grocery, working around some of the wholesale florists' places, experiences from which Roy emerged with that look of troubled inquiry clouding his honest gaze more markedly than before. Though brave and undiscouraged still, he felt at times that there must be something the matter with him, some mysterious fault which he would eagerly correct, if he could only find out what it was. At the dairy he could not keep his chart straight, there were complaints from the patrons about their orders being mixed, or filled wrong or not filled at all; he even strayed from his route and delivered to people outside the Company's sphere of custom. He was sure that he would have learned in time, but they discharged him without giving him a chance, the boss freeing his mind about Roy's mental equipment and probable future in a speech of blistering personalities which the young fellow stood as he used to stand abuse of old, silently and without wincing. It was very much the same story at the other places; Roy was slow; he made mistakes; he had trouble with names and addresses; someone must be eternally undoing and doing over again,

after him. He became quite inured to being called a boob and a poor fish, to being jeered at and berated and advised to go back to the bush. Anyone could do it with impunity for he was peaceable by nature, and too conscious of inadequacy to take umbrage at what he thought was very likely true. It did not depress or embitter, it merely puzzled him; it seemed to him that if instead of bawling him out, they would only tell him what was the matter with him, he would fix it. It might take him longer than most people, but he would try very hard, if they would just wait for him a little. He was patient; why couldn't they be?

The adventure, or the series of misadventures, ended at last when he got employment running an elevator at one of the packing-houses in the stockyards district. The superintendent, who took him in a pinch, later congratulated himself in surprise and wonder; never in his experience, he said, did a more hopeless-looking specimen turn out better! "Had to have *somebody,* you know. This one had the muscle anyhow—you don't expect a whole lot of sense. Just so they're middling honest and don't souse, that's all," said Mr. Graddy liberally. "Mac's all that and then some. Right with the job, every minute, faithful as a rock! He stuck all during the strike, and that's a test. Oftentimes the men are loyal, or want to be, only they're scared—good reason why! Maybe nobody exactly hankered to tackle McArdle, and persuade him to quit; it's not so easy to persuade a fellow that's about seven feet high, with a fist on him like a steam-hammer," Mr. Graddy suggested with a wintry smile. "And he didn't seem to mind brickbats zipping past his ear—acted like he thought it was all in the day's work! Yes, sir, he's one good freight-wrangler, Mac is; it's been two or three years now, and I guess he's a fixture.

There're plenty of these brainy boys around that I wouldn't trade him for."

All this while Deercreek Pike never entirely lost sight of its late resident; every now and then someone saw the young man always working tooth and nail at the job of the moment, always willing and cheerful and blundering innocently, with the dog-like anxiety to understand and obey dominating his every movement visibly. He never complained of the bad luck or exalted himself over the good, not withheld therefrom by pride, but by a simple conviction that nobody cared or would be interested to know. Luther indeed guessed something of his ups and downs and would offer boyish counsel at times; but mostly their friendship was as inarticulate as masculine friendships in general. Roy admired the other profoundly and without a trace of envy, for being everything that he himself was not. Luther had that indefinable yet dazzling "look"; he was bright; he could hitch up a team faster than the best man Schulte had; he could do sums in his head; he could learn anything right off. Who would not admire him? Or what could be more reasonable? Luther would have been harder put to it to justify his own feeling; perhaps it was not essentially of so firm and enduring a texture. Cornered, he would have owned with a young man's agonized diffidence that he "thought a lot of Roy," but he would have felt obliged to own also that Roy was not bright, and could only learn by the hardest, and had no "look"—anything but! Nevertheless he "thought a lot of Roy"; kissing goes by favor.

The Muller Abbattoir Company's plant was near enough to the Western Avenue market district to be called by a slight stretch of veracity, on the way; that is, it was on the way going out of town, not coming in. The mar-

ket-wagons arrived too early for creatures of such luxurious habit as packing-house hands to be stirring; *their* day did not begin until seven o'clock, and was a mere eight-hour matter at that, with an hour off for the noon meal, time-and-a-half for overtime, and other privileges and emoluments impossible on the Pike. When could any farmer or farmer's wife stop at only eight hours' work, and what was overtime to them? Halting for a word with his friend as they drove homewards of a Wednesday afternoon—the packing-house closed Saturdays at twelve, and Roy had half the day off like the rest of the employees—Luther sometimes felt that the other's lot, and homeless, kinless estate were not so pitiable, after all, as some people, his mother for instance, considered. Roy had only himself to take care of, and was making good money at an easy job—easy in comparison to what he had had on the farm, to what everybody had on the farm, for that matter, Luther thought, invaded by a subtle discontent. He marvelled how Roy could still remember that forlorn old place of his with so much affection, and still so much regret the loss of it. In the country life was one round of grinding toil always with meagre and uncertain results under the best of conditions; and the conditions Roy had had to endure were unspeakable. He seemed to have forgotten all that part of it, and would talk about the swimming-hole and the times they raided old man Wessel's orchard, and the church picnics at Silver Grove, just as if all his Deercreek days had been passed swimming, and hooking apples, and picnicing, just as if he did not know what it was to 'tend corn all day long and come in with an aching back and get a strap laid across it for his reward.

"You wouldn't wanta go back, Roy? Now honest,

would you if you had th' chanst?" Luther challenged him.

Roy reflected soberly, wrinkling his brows. "I wouldn't wanta give up here 'n' go back 'n' work f'r Steinmetz," he announced at last.

"Well, you didn't have no good time workin' f'r y'r paw."

"No," said Roy, after giving the facts due consideration from that angle also. "But I dunno—it was all right, I guess. Annyways, he's dead, 'n' y' don' wanna hol' nothin' up again' dead folks. I wouldn't, anyhow."

Luther sat gazing at him for a moment of blank astonishment. "Why, Roy, y' ain't afraid of him gettin' mad 'n' ha'ntin' you? You don't b'lieve in *that*, do you?" he asked at length, almost fearful of what revelation might follow; and it was with a good deal of relief that he encountered, instead, Roy's slow grin.

"Pap? Naw, I don't guess he'd bother f'r t' ha'nt *me*," he said. "He'd likely ruther ha'nt erroun some o' these here s'loons. No, I ain't afraid of him tryin' t' git even with me; but that's just it. Seems like it ain't hardly fair t' think mean er say mean 'bout him, long's he can't do nothin' 'bout it any more. Times I'm kinda sorry f'r him, Loot. Bein' dead 'n' all, y' know."

This last statement momentarily aroused fresh doubts as to his friend's sanity in Luther's mind, but on second thought he dismissed them. For one thing, Roy looked far too solid, serene and well-balanced as he lounged there alongside his elevator, awaiting the signal from above to hoist away the load of barrels he had just trundled on, to be in any degree mentally disordered; and for another, what he said accorded with all his behaviour

towards David McArdle for years. Son or no son, who but Roy would have been so good to the old reprobate? "He ain't so much f'r headpiece, but he's got real good feelings, Roy has," Luther had heard his mother say. "That's anyhow something."

## IV

LUTHER was verging on twenty when the household sustained what was generally regarded along the Pike as its first serious visitation. Alvin and Hilda had had to take their share of ill-luck with the stock or the crops, there had been minor worries, losses and disappointments, but on the whole they had prospered; and now with the farm clear of debt, money in bank, children all raised and a credit to them, they faced old age, it would seem, in security. But call no man happy till he dies!—a piece of philosophy which, by the way, would have been accounted arrant drivel by either of them. The news went up and down the community one day that Hermann, the oldest Nichols son, the one that had the fine job with the Big Four, going on ten years now, freight-engineer or whatever, had come back home to live. He had had unluck with his health getting bad, so the doctor said he shouldn't work railroading any more, on account so much coal-smoke in his lungs. In the country he could live yet, the doctor said, and work at farm work out-doors; so here he comes back with his wife and two children, the oldest should be about five, and the other just a few months' baby! No, he didn't look so bad, you wouldn't know there was nothing the matter with him, just meeting him; and what like was his wife? Here about two-thirds of the Pike pursed its lips and wagged its head with a discreet, hands-off air; the other third wondered openly how she would make out with Lizzie? You might say Lizzie

was an old maid now, and you know how old maids get; would the house be big enough to hold them and her too?

This last question was not meant to be taken literally; but in fact the augmented family were living rather too close for entire comfort, though Alvin and his wife had brought up the five children in those same limited quarters. Mrs. Hermann, however, turned out likable enough; she was a little, fading creature who must have been strikingly pretty in her time of youth and freshness. Lizzie shrewdly guessed her to be considerably older than Hermann to whom she devoted herself with a tigerish maternalism. "I don't know was Hermann her last chance or not, but it looks that way," said the sister-in-law, acidly humorous. "These here pretty ones they turn th' men down an' turn 'em down till all of a sudden they find out they ain't so young yet theirselves, an' they'd better quick grab off th' next one f'r fear there mightn't be any more! I tell you they think a lot of *him*. Minnie, she's more f'r Hermann than she's f'r th' two kids a whole lot," Lizzie alleged. "She acts like he was th' grandest thing on top of th' earth—kids ain't in it 'longside o' Pop. An' them married eight years a'ready! It ain't often you see 'em that way after all that time."

It was the truth. The glamour of Hermann's "look" and of the days of their courtship seemed never to have worn off for his wife; no matter how old, broken or defeated, he would always be for her the gay, masterfully wooing gallant. The eagerness and whole-heartedness of her devotion won the family regard even while they made fun of her. "That ain't so bad havin' him home sick, hey?" said Mrs. Alvin, chucklingly observing the younger woman as she flitted about Hermann with anxious little attentions. "You anyhow know where he is every minute of th' time, hey? Sick is a whole lot better than

havin' some other woman makin' up to him!" She chuckled again, went off into an empurpling fit of amusement, indeed, to meet the darting jealousy of the other's glance. "No hardt feelings, Minnie. I just meant fun."

"Hermie ain't never give a thought to nobody but me," said little Mrs. Hermann, tensely. "It's all right joking for us older ones, Maw Nichols, but I guess you've forgot about how careful a person had oughta be not puttin' notions in th' children's heads."

"Yeh, th' baby he gets a whole lot notions in his head, don't he?" retorted Hermann's mother exasperatingly unmoved, her round, ruddy, blotched face and twinkling little eyes fairly radiating good-humored malice; she rolled the youngster about on her ample lap, tickling him with experienced fingers. "Oh my, such a bad old grossmommy, ain't it? Learnin' Hermie such badness! Oh *my*!" Little Hermann who was a fat, sober, ordinarily rather inert child, burst into delighted clucks and cooings while the mother looked on, irritated at her own irritation.

"Never you mind, Minnie," said Alvin, siding with his daughter-in-law as he almost always did, either to be "contrary" as Mrs. Alvin openly charged, or out of some queer, eminently masculine sympathy for the poor nervous thing. "Maw's on'y teasing and you have right anyhow. Maybe Hermie don't pick up nothin', but Jos'phine might; she's old enough. Now, Maw, 'nuff's plenty. You'd oughta had y'r laugh out by this time."

"Folks oughta have their own home—not but what we all think a lot of each other, 'n' you've done ev'thing f'r Min 'n' I, 'n' we 'preciate it," said Hermann. "Just 's soon's I git well——" He broke into the slight, light coughing that sounded so harmless, yet wore on the nerves by a kind of trivial persistence; and Minnie flew

for the hot milk, and his mother abandoned her rogueries to assure him vehemently that he was all right now already, and just a big loafer, that she'd take a stick to d'reckly 'n' *that* would cure him up, like it used to when he was a boy!

In fact during the next few months, if no better, he was at least no worse; he stayed in the open, worked his share, and had it not been for worry about his job and prospects and state of partial dependence, might have made some real progress towards recovery. But the position galled him; he brooded over being a burden, besides missing sorely the friends and habits and responsibilities of ten years past. Sometimes he would talk to Luther about his simple adventures of the road and round-house, taking trains out through the frigid silence of a winter's night, when sitting in his cab with the fires under his very hand, the breath would turn to frost on his beard; or in those other seasons when the rails swam in a blur of heat and the wind of motion made it bearable as long as he kept going but standing still on a siding somewhere in the open fields or at the bottom of a cut with the sun training down on the roof of the cab—Oh, boy! There was the time old Number Fourteen stalled on him this side of Lawrenceville Junction with the Midnight Flier due behind every minute; the time he nearly got caught in the turntable-pit at the East St. Louis car-barns; the time Number Seventy-One jumped the tracks and rolled over twice, and he found himself miraculously alive and unhurt in the middle of a patch of ploughed ground where he must have been flung "by this here what they call centrifugal force, I guess." His fireman was killed, crushed to death under the tender—a dog-gone shame! Jake Bowers his name was—nice fellow as you'd ever see—and he left a wife and baby, too. "Well, I don't

know but they was as well off with him dead and be done with it as having him round kinda half-sick 'n' half well so's to be plum no good 'n' livin' off his folks," Hermann wound up gloomily. Luther, though desirous of comforting him, never could think of anything to say; it was the forlorn truth that Hermann was not much good and was living off his folks, and Luther knew of no way to gloss over these facts; he was not conspicuously quick of mind, and moreover still felt somewhat shy of this elder brother whom, with the passage of years, he had almost ceased to know. But whenever Lizzie chanced to be within hearing, she took the other up promptly, with a sort of sharp-tongued kindliness.

"Well, f'r th' love of Mike, I wish you'd just listen at Hermann! What's eatin' you *now*? Ain't you 'n' Min both of you workin 'round 'n' doin' all you can? Who's doggin' you? Think we wanna git Hermie out ploughin' er send Jos'phine t' stand on market, huh? Say, you make me tired! Pop's *gotta* have help t' run th' place, ain't he? It's either you er hire somebody outside."

"Pop's got Loot here," Hermann said grimly. "He don' need another man any more 'n he needs another foot."

"All right! Have it y'r own way!" rejoined his sister, knowing well that this statement could not be contradicted and making up for the lack of plausible, satisfactory repartee by changing ground briskly; she went on in an even louder, rougher, more dictatorial manner than before. "We're anyhow livin' yet, nor we don't aim t' go t' th' poorhouse f'r a while. Next time Pop goes in town I'll tell him t' put a button up his nose f'r t' keep him in mind he's gotta go see a lawyer t' sue you 'n' Min f'r board-bill. That'd oughta satisfy you!' Hermann joined, though rather faint-heartedly, in her boisterous

laughter; and as for Luther, he did not laugh at all. Even if he had possessed enough of a histrionic gift, the situation, from his point of view, was much too serious for humane pretences.

It was Maggie Nichols, or Maggie Teeter, as she was now, who cut the knot for all of them in the end; and, to continue the figure, she did it with one sharp stroke, unmindful of anybody's feelings, like a surgeon. Several years of married life, the care of a large family and unceasing hard work had not softened Maggie's disposition or manners; she looked almost as old as her mother, and was pretty shrewish at times. She and Dave came over one Sunday to see the invalid, after he had been at home more than six months. It was their first chance, Maggie explained; they hardly ever got to go anywhere, it was always the children or something, she said not too patiently. And Hermann surely did look peaked, didn't he? Nobody ever really got cured of it, she'd always heard, but you could live along for years and years with only one lung or even only a little piece of one, so no need to get scared. Might as well make up your mind to it; we'd anyhow all of us got to go some day sooner or later, and didn't make much difference what you went of.

"That's what we all of us keep tellin' Hermann—not to worry, 'cause it don't do no good," his mother interposed hastily; later the main cause of the worrying was laid before Maggie, and it was then that she exercised her sword-like promptness of decision.

"My goodness, Hermann's got right. There ain't no three men's work here, let alone you're all under each other's feet, so many of you. And it ain't so easy f'r Pop 'n' Mom at their age, when they'd oughta have it a little easier, having to begin all over again lookin' twice at every penny wonderin' if they durst t' spend it. Yeh,

I know 'tain't Hermann's fault; he don' wanna be sick. But it don't help none all of you settin' roun' here jawin' about it. Why don't Loot go git a job, s' long 's Hermann can't? Ain't no law 'gainst it, I guess. Loot don't *have* t' live at home 'n' Herm does. Well!" ,,

This focussed the family attention on Luther, who sat benumbed, her words drumming upon his mind like hail on a roof; for that matter, the suggestion was so revolutionary that the rest of them shared measurably in his confusion. For them, Luther's life, like their own, was already set in the mold wherein it had been run; it required an acrobatic effort of their by no means supple or active imagination to vision him doing or being anything but what he had always done and been.

"You mean him 'n' Hermann should trade places like playing chequers, Maggie?" queried Mrs. Alvin at last. "Lootie he should go railroading, huh?"

"Naw, I don't mean nothin' like that. You talk like they wasn't nothin' t' be done on God's earth except railroading or farming!" ejaculated Maggie in impatient scorn. "I'm just sayin' let Loot go in th' city er anywhere 'n' git him a job. That'd anyhow ease things up f'r th' rest of you some. What's th' matter with Loot workin' out? Ain't Lizzie f'r years?"

"No, I ain't, Maggie Teeter. I like th' way you talk!" Lizzie flashed out angrily, reddening to her eyes. "I live home. I wouldn't work out f'r nobody, 'n' you know it!"

"She don' mean *live* out, like hired help—you don't mean that, do you, Maggie?" David Teeter insinuated mildly; David was a quiet, peace-loving man. "I guess we all know Lizzie ain't ever done no hired-girl work. But now, Loot——"

"I—I dunno what kinda job I could do——" Luther

stammered; his thought was as incoherent as his speech. Certain vistas had already opened before him; dreams he would have shamefacedly disavowed revisited him dazzling with promise. But as everybody looked at him again dubiously and measuringly, his heart sank. "I—I don' guess—I don' b'lieve I know enough," he mumbled irresolute and dejected.

The spectacle, strange to say, provoked Lizzie and his mother to sudden, almost violent championship of the plan although both, recovering from their first surprise, had been unfavorably disposed towards it. Now they uttered shrill irony in concert. Didn't know enough, huh? Everybody in town was awfully smart, of course! Didn't know enough! Ain't it a pity folks has got to know such a lot? Just thinka that doppus Roy McArdle, how much *he* knew! Here he went 'n' got a job—but of course Lootie couldn't; Loot didn't know nothin' 'longside o' Roy—oh my, no!

" 'T ain't no more 'n' tryin' anyhow," observed Maggie, now quite dispassionately; it was as if she had deliberately and of full intent laid a train, fired the fuse, and was standing aside to contemplate the results of the explosion, occasionally throwing on an extra handful of fuel.

"How much Roy make, Loot?" Hermann asked with eagerness. " 'T ain't no heavy work, just running that there elevator, is it?" One guessed that the poor fellow was concerned less with Roy than with Roy's job which might be within his own slender capacity. "Eighteen dollars a week?" he repeated incredulously, his face falling. "That's mighty little. Still, if I could get somepin' on that order—on'y f'r it's bein' indoors mostly——"

"Aw, fergit it!' Lizzie advised him harshly. "You couldn't jam them big packin'-cases erroun'. 'T ain't

no use, Hermann, you gotta stay *put*—till you git well, I mean," she interlined quickly. "But ain't no reason why Loot should." Lizzie had become a finished convert, and was imbued with all the convert's irresponsible zeal.

"By Emil Schulte he could get a job, huh?" suggested Mrs. Alvin, practically. "Or Emil might likely know somebody."

"He's goin' outa th' horse-liv'ry, though, just 's soon 's he gits enough machines."

"Well, machines they gotta have somebody t' look after 'em same like horses, ain't it?"

" 'T ain't no more 'n' findin' out, anyhow," reiterated Maggie sententiously.

Perhaps the great and moving events of every man's career are brought to pass with a like simplicity; but Luther was as incapable of any such guess as he would have been of putting it into any such words. The project with the radical, far-reaching changes it must involve was to him bewildering, tremendous; he might have been the first boy in the world to leave home in search of a living elsewhere! As has been said he was not interested in fiction even of the variety that used to retail for a dime, and at this date moving-picture entertainment was, as the phrase goes, "in its infancy," so that he had never become familiarized with the classic figure of youth faring forth to adventure from the paternal roof-tree. Hermann and Gus had done that very thing, but there had been nothing dramatic about it; Luther thought of his brothers simply as being "out for themslves"; the idea that he too might be out for himself never before took lodgment in his mind, it seemed so fantastic an impossibility. He went about now in a state of excited hope, doubt, alternating confidence and apprehension, and a feverish haste to be off and secure the job, any job, before

the family changed its collective mind, and ordained that he should stay at home after all. In talking about it, however, he developed a latent strain of caution, determined that, should the scheme fall through, there should be no laughing at him—not at Luther Nichols!

"Sure, I'm fixin' t' look f'r a job, sure!" he said unemotionally in response to all inquiries. "But mebbe I won't find none, y' can't tell. Still, 't ain't no more 'n' tryin'." He had noted that that last was a potent phrase of Maggie's, one that for some reason never failed of its effect.

His cup was filled to overflowing when the application to Emil Schulte resulted successfully. Alvin went along to see or help his son through the ordeal next market-day. They found the livery magnate at the same Fifteenth Street corner by the Canal, nowise changed from the Hector known of yore, but in a decidedly different environment. The office had been furbished up; the labyrinth of sheds and passages had given way to a spacious basilica of steel and concrete, advertised fireproof; instead of the shiny barouches and coupes with shafts pointed lance-like to the sky, there were now a number of equally spruce automobiles, mostly bought second-hand, to be sure, but nevertheless glorious without and within, with crisp-laundered seat-covers, robes neatly folded on their bright rails, lamps, brakes, starters, all in apple-pie order, and a set of smart young men in semi-military uniforms and gaiters to run them. Not for nothing had Emil frequented the races, the cabarets and other resorts popular in "nifty" circles. Unless for a utility-wagon or truck, he would have none of the rattletrap, everybody's-friend conveyances whose name has been honorably heard round the world; they are efficient and expeditious carriers, but it must be allowed by their

warmest champions desperately un-nifty in appearance. And likewise his personnel was selected and equipped with an eye to the unimpeachable niftiness that prevails in the metropolitan cities of our eastern seaboard, and for that matter here at home among the swell North Hill trade. "You got to keep things up in style," was Mr. Schulte's dictum. "And then you got to figger out a whole lot of little things that people like or dislike. Take, f'r instance, hearses; old times, every livery-stable man had a hearse just like he had a hydrant; of course, things are changed now and a good deal more specialized. Nobody but undertakers has 'em any more; but *I* never did, anyhow, though there used to was money in it. Tell you why: I seen a hearse give customers an unpleasant feeling. It's queer, but it *did*. I useta take notice when I was a young fella driving for old Don Shaefer that had the stable down here on Third Street. Folks 'd come in and see the thing standing there with a big white cloth all over it, of course, but anybody would know what it was just the same. You can't make a hearse look like anything *but* a hearse any more 'n' you can make a cemetery look like a picnic-park. I seen it give a disagreeable impression somehow, and I made up my mind right then. 'Nix on the hearses!' I says to myself. 'I ain't ever going to have one of 'em around when *I* get *my* place!' And I never did! Other men in the business useta argue I lost trade on it, but I don't know. I was always willing to take less money and ride live people, 'stead of dead ones. And I ain't gone bust yet!"

With his exacting standards, it was not surprising that when the proposition, as he undoubtedly would have called it, concerning Luther was broached to him, Mr. Schulte experienced a definite shock. Years of self-control and practice in meeting all kinds of "propositions"

enabled him to keep his usual impassive and inscrutable countenance, but he had a moment of amused dismay, as he chewed his toothpick and studied the face and figure of this aspirant. Emil was a good-natured man, averse to hurting anybody's feelings wantonly; in common kindness, he did not want to betray his real reasons for refusing. But the mere notion of such a creature on the front seat of one of his cars divided him between a desire to swear and a desire to laugh, both well-nigh ungovernable; did anyone ever see a hickier hick, he questioned inwardly? That hair-cut! That four-in-hand tie, ready. made on a backing of buckram! "And my God, looka those pants!" Mr. Schulte ejaculated to himself in pious horror. "Where do they get 'em? The things must grow that way somewhere; there ain't a tailor in creation that would make pants like that!" He hesitated, clearing his throat elaborately, seeking time to invent some excuse. Out of a past much more antique reckoned by experiences than by actual count of years, there visited him a recollection of himself as a young fellow just starting out; not so much style about *him* either in those days! He didn't have anything on this boy, Emil mused with a kind of cynical sentimentality. Hermann Nagel, Luther's grandfather, hard-fisted old German that he was, had yet been good to that young Schulte, after his fashion; and blood is thicker than water.

"Well now, I don't know—I'm not exactly needing any help just now—got all the chuffoors I can handle anyhow——" he began, and hesitated again, reluctant to utter the fatal words; it suddenly struck him, surveying Luther, that the boy had a kind of look about him, even with that hair-cut, that neck-tie, those unspeakable pants. He held his head up, and he certainly did have one nifty figure, thought Emil, whose own tendency to increasing

girth of late caused him to be regretfully observant. "I guess it's all right, though—I guess I can use you round the place anyhow," he said with loud heartiness. "Of course you can't expect to get much right off; you don't know nothing yet, see? But you'll learn as you go along, if you stick; that's up to *you*, that part of it. 'S all right, Luther, you can take a try at it here, anyhow. Have a smoke, Alvin?"

# V

NEITHER at that initial interview, nor afterwards during the entire period of his apprenticeship—so to call it—did Luther ever remind Mr. Schulte of the latter's indefinite earlier promises, or of their almost equally indefinite family tie; a newly developed wariness restrained him. Let his employer remember all such details himself, and be the first to mention them, Luther argued; and the same feeling or process of reasoning kept him from seeking immediate friendship with the other young men at the garage; let them take the first steps! It was a species of naïve cunning, perhaps native, perhaps bred and fostered by the age-old hostility between town and country, touched with vanity, shyness, the consciousness of inexperience, or what you will. That he was reasonably safe who kept his eyes and ears open and his mouth shut was a bit of old-wives' doctrine Mrs. Alvin often took occasion to inculcate, and Luther, at this stage of his career, adhered to it studiously. He went about his work, washing down and polishing the automobiles, dusting cushions, rubbing up metal-work in a guarded silence, answering when spoken to, but never volunteering conversation, and meanwhile keeping his eyes and ears open, that is to say watching and listening, with a concentration that fairly made those organs ache. It was a lonesome business, but not particularly difficult; no one made any real effort to break down his barriers. The mechanics in the small shop Schulte maintained for making minor repairs found the new recruit a willing and

efficient helper quick to learn and handy with tools, but they did not interest themselves in him personally; and as for the chauffeurs they scarcely knew that he existed. After six weeks at the garage, not a soul of them all could have given his surname, or told where he lived. He came every morning promptly, registered his arrival on the time-clock, and assumed the overalls in which he spent the day. "Here, Bill!" or "Say, you!" were forms of address in much more general use than his own name, and he always responded readily, without resentment. If they did not know what his name was, let them find out; *he* was not going to tell them!

Schulte, who never seemed to be keeping *his* eyes and ears open, yet never missed a thing that went on in the garage or shop, who himself never lifted a finger, yet kept the entire establishment in steady activity, sometimes on his apparently desultory tours of the premises would run across Luther and give him a negligent word. "Hello, Loot! That you? How's things?" the monarch said and strolled on, inattentive to how things were, forgetting this neophyte the next minute. Luther, for his part, never sought to detain or enlighten him; if Schulte wanted to know, let him ask again, he said to himself as prostrate under a machine, bedewed wih grease and grime, his hair in his eyes, he watched the head of the place away. And possibly young Mr. Nichols, returning to the matter in hand, gave the wrench an extra twist or the bolt a sharper rap in a momentary explosion of temper. "All right f'r *you*, Emil Schulte, comin' round here all diked out like Sunday! You just wait, I'll show you —you 'n' y'r smarty shuffoors! Think you're so much! I'll show you!" Luther remarked most ungratefully, through set teeth—but he remarked it only mentally; he was not going to go around saying things like that out

loud to anybody or where anybody could hear him —not he! No one should have the laugh on Luther Nichols.

Besides, it sometimes occurred to him that in Emil's position it might be a necessity to put on style—Luther's own phrase; all Schulte's trade was stylish, and those smarty chuffoors, Luther guessed with his ingenuous shrewdness, would defer only to a stylish manager. That they did defer most abjectly he had observed with secret delight and an unwilling admiration for the tyrant. Luther disliked and was a little overawed and very much perplexed by these chauffeurs; they were always offensively dressed up, always fresh shaved, always finickingly clean. Their artificial civilities in public irritated him; he thought them "slick" with their constant thank-youing, their upright and careful bearing, their salutes, their silent, deft, unobtrusive, formal attentions to Schulte's women patrons. Luther had never opened a door for his mother or helped her into or out of a vehicle, or placed a chair for her, or taken off his hat in her presence, in his life; to get up and stand when Lizzie spoke to him or entered the room would have seemed to him a farcical flourish—as indeed it would have to Lizzie herself. To his ears, attuned to the bawling genialities, the bawling exchanges of billingsgate in Deercreek circles, the low-voiced, respectful reticence insisted upon by Schulte seemed repellently unnatural, even unmanly. And when it came to other habits, other practices——! He thought that he would never forget the calling-down one of the myrmidons earned for doing what do you think? What? Why, the simplest and most innocent thing in the world! Emil issued from his office, purple of countenance, breathing out fire and slaughter—to translate into printable language the sizzling condemnations he actually did

breathe out. "Look here, you——! You'll lay off spitting as long as you drive for me, see? I don't care where you spit, when you're any place else, nor how much, nor why, nor nothing about it, but just let me catch you spitting again around one of my cars, and you'll go spit——" Mr. Schulte specified where the unfortunate would go spit in lurid detail; when he got through he had achieved a plain man's masterpiece of vituperation. The garage listened in sincere consternation; and Luther perceived that he himself was alone in his feeling of indignant sympathy. Whether they subscribed to Schulte's opinions or not, nobody offered to condole with the culprit even in private. The example influenced Luther against offering condolences which had been his first impulse; though heartless, it appeared to be the part of prudence to imitate the rest and shun this pariah's society. He shortly thereafter disappeared, and was next heard of officiating on what the others called a yap-wagon—"That's about where he belongs, too!" they commented scornfully.

Luther, upon a cautious and roundabout inquiry, discovered that a yap-wagon was in conventional parlance, a sight-seeing automobile; but the distinction between yap-wagons and the elect machine population of Shulte's Private Garage was at this time too fine for him. He could no more comprehend certain classifications than he could comprehend the heinousness of the late chauffeur's crime. These same dressy, smarty, smooth-spoken drivers whom Shulte would not allow to spit while on duty, indulged in all sorts of questionable practices while off, and he never opened his mouth in disapproval or rebuke! They smoked like chimnies, they rolled dice by the hour, they told obscene stories without end, they familiarly employed language that startled even Luther's tolerably

seasoned ears. It appeared that they knew everything there was to know, and some things a knowledge of which is superfluous, and did not hesitate to impart it to one another, even when Schulte was within hearing. He paid no attention; Luther began to believe that he would have paid no attention if they had confessed to murder and arson instead of breakages of the Seventh Commandment. And then he hauled a man up and gave him hell-fire-and-brimstone for spitting! It was beyond human understanding. However, about this matter, as about others small yet of daily recurrence, Luther rather plumed himself on his ability to take a hint; no one should ever have the chance to call *him* down for ill-advised or untimely spitting. Schulte had said in the beginning that it was up to him, Luther, to learn, and Luther meant to learn, no matter how silly or fantastic the lesson set for him.

All this while, it is doubtful whether he could have kept on in his self-enforced isolation if it had not been for Roy with whom he was living in as close companionship as was possible for men at work all day long in ways so different. It was Roy, in fact, who guided Luther to the rooming-house where they now shared accommodations, to wit: Mrs. Siefert's, Nine-Sixty-One, Amelia Street. Roy himself had been lodging there the past ten months, and it was a dandy place, he told Luther enthusiastically.

"She don't set no meals regularly, y' know, she just rents out rooms; but here a spell back, she begun givin' me breakfas' 'n' she's been doin' it ever since. Ever'body she's got goes out workin' all day, 'n' eats wherever they are, I guess, excep' some of the women cooks in their rooms," he explained circumstantially. "I'm th' on'y one she gives breakfas' to. It's a dandy place."

"Gee, you gotta right t' think so, anyhow—her doin' so much extra f'r you!"

"Uh-huh," Roy acquiesced seriously; but after an instant during which the logic of Luther's deductions was penetrating him, so to speak, he added, evidently to clear up the position: "She's gotta girl—a girl of her own, not no hired one, I don't mean." He met the other's eye without diffidence as he finished: "Her 'n' me're goin' t'gether."

"*Oh!*" said Luther, enlightened and interested. "What's her name?"

"Ellie."

"Is she pretty?"

"Nothin' extry," said the lover, tranquilly. "She just looks kinda nice." Roy paused, considering, and went on with his scrupulous fairness: "I ain't so much on looks myself, Loot, so I'v alluz felt like I hadn't oughta ast f'r nothin' *that* way. But I bet when you see Ellie, you'll allow she looks real nice. She's smart. She works in a wholesale milliner's. Six dollars a week. We're aimin' t' git married some day."

Luther expressed a suitable enthusiasm. "Well, I *will!*" he said heartily. Indeed this spirited design aroused no less respect than surprise; Roy wasn't so slow, he thought admiringly. "How soon, d' you guess?"

"I dunno. Soon's we can. We're savin' up f'r it."

Luther meditated, the sober second thought that too often works devastation, undermining his sympathy. "I guess you'd oughta be real careful, Roy. It runs inta money—'n' you ain't hardly got enough, I don' b'lieve, th' two of you t'gether 'f she keeps on workin' even. Will she?"

"Uh-huh, she wants to. We're figgerin' on that."

"Yeh, but looka here, s'posin' you have kids? You're likely, y'know."

Roy did not appear in the least put about by this pessimistic forecast; on the contrary, his sober blue eyes took on an expression new to his friend and somehow embarrassing to witness. It was as if he looked through immeasurable distances towards some height lofty, and splendid and mysterious. "I'm aimin' to," he said. "I like kids. I'm gonna have some boys—say, two-three boys. 'N' then I'd like a little girl. Course I know you can't fix things like that t' suit you, but that's what I'd like, and it ain't no harm thinking'. On'y I don't ever say nothin' t' Ellie 'bout it. You don't to a girl, y' know."

"Sure not!"

"Mebbe I kin fix t' git back th' ol' place—buy it off of Steinmetz, mebbe, er fix somehow so's we kin go out there t' live. Children had oughta be brung up in th' country. Town ain't no place for 'em," Roy said staidly; he disclosed some other theories about the founding and management of a family, Luther listening in renewed wonder. Roy was the last person on earth whom anyone would suspect of giving thought to such a subject. Luther forebore comment out of a sincere affection for his friend, and a sincere, though as he believed thoroughly groundless and futile hope that Roy would one day realize the impossible dream that haunted him so. According to Luther's youthfully calculating judgment, this marriage with the prospective crop of children—and what would Roy's Ellie say to *that,* he queried privately with a grin—was no more practicable or desirable a "proposition" for Roy than that other preposterous one of going back to the farm. And as to those ideas about how the young should be brought up, Luther found him-

self in direct opposition to them; by this time he was all for the town. It might be lonesome at first, but that lonesomeness was bound to wear off, he argued; and its superiority in the way of comforts, diversions, opportunities for making money and having a good time, was too obvious to need discussion. Still he 'thought a lot of Roy," and would be glad to see these whims of his gratified, outlandish as they were.

Nine-Sixty-One, Amelia, was a three-story stone-front which, like every other rooming-house known to history, had seen better days; what rooming-house was ever designed at the outset to be a rooming-house, or what builder ever knowingly and intentionally erected one? They are invariably the erstwhile comely homes of a past generation, now fallen on evil times. There were two or three blocks of them on either side of Amelia Street, displaying slight variations in Victorian architecture, and present-day uses, some made over into tenements with saloons, barber-shops and boot-blacking "parlors" on the first floors, some rented out to roomers from cellar to attic, but one and all unkempt and declassed. At the rear their doors debouched upon sinister alleys, or ghastly little courtyards reticulated with dirty clothesline. Here and there a house was occupied by negroes, here and there by white tenants of yet more unsavory reputation; the slums were creeping—no, striding, galloping!—upon Amelia Street, and it must be divulged with regret that Number Nine-Sixty-One had no air of withstanding that dire advance. Externally, at least, it was as down-at-heel, as lacking in moral fibre as its neighbors. The only clean place in the vicinity was the Bald Eagle Engine-House and Hook-and-Ladder Company 17; and strangely enough, the uniforms and bright equipment and orderliness imparted no sense of security amidst such

an environment; they only symbolized restraint and officialdom.

Luther, however, was no captious critic, nor had the farm-life of Deercreek supplied him with too exacting standards. He was not disposed to make comparisons. Mrs. Siefert's establishment with its all but opaque window shrouded by completely opaque lace curtains; with its Isabella-hued bed-linen, its carpets furred with lint, its perennial odors; with the lady in the second-floor front who took an overdose, and had to be brought to by the pulmotor-squad from the Engine-House; with the other lady in the second-floor back whom the landlord evicted for having too many visitors; with the corn-doctor in the basement, and the I. W. W. agitator in the garret—with all these features, Mrs. Siefert's establishment contrasted with his mother's did not impress Luther unfavorably; he did not expect or really desire it to resemble his home. Likewise, his acquaintance with the other sex having hitherto been limited to weatherbeaten and strident-voiced harridans of Mrs. Alvin's age and lummoxes of young girl-louts his own age, he was on the whole rather agreeably surprised and interested to encounter in the Siefert mother and daughter types that if not precisely superior were at any rate different. "'S my friend, Loot Nichols, Mis' Siefert," said Roy presenting him, and Luther thereupon shook hands with the lady who was thin and moreover excessively thinly attired in a soiled sateen gabardine which she called a bungalow-apron, and apparently considered of a character to do away with the necessity for any sort of undergarments. Virtue itself, however, could not have taken alarm at this costume's potential revelations; a lath draped in unwashed rags would have been as provoking to the senses as Mrs. Siefert. She had a grayish-drab

complexion, and an astoundingly perfect set of teeth, white, gleaming, regular as a row of tombstones; every-one of them showed as she smiled upon Luther with assurances that she was pleased to meet him. Mr. Nichols, whose own teeth were very strong and securely lodged, could not take his eyes off the display; it was phenomenal for a woman who, in conscience, must be old enough to be his mother; Mrs. Alvin had a very scattering outfit.

"*Any* frien' of Roy's, of course," said Roy's mother-in-law-elect, graciously, staring pretty hard, on her side. "I jus' hope you'll make yourself at home. It's two dollars a week in advance—I guess Roy told you?"

"Well, I guess he did! I guess I told him that right the first thing!" said Ellie, pertly.

Luther had been duly introduced to her, Roy pushing him towards her with the information: "'S Ellie!"; and they looked at each other and shook hands, but in silence, Luther once more admitting inwardly with a surprise not untouched with envy that Roy wasn't so slow! The fact was that without being aware of it, for he was incapable of such a piece of finesse, Roy had insured a favorable reception for his lady-love as skilfully as the most astute and practiced of diplomats merely by what the latter would have pronounced to be the familiar trick of under-statement. Honest Roy only wanted to tell the truth, and indeed had told it! Miss Siefert *was* "nothing extra" as to looks except for the indefinable freshness and allure of youth; Luther saw that she had irregular features neither pretty nor homely, teeth as shiny as her mother's, a rather dull complexion which she touched up liberally, a buxom figure; all these very moderate charms Luther saw, and yet was stirred to admiration. This was the first time Ellie had spoken; and she now struck into the conversation with an odd effect of determination to

sparkle and be noticed. "Go *on*, Roy, don't you get fresh!" she commanded, giving him a playful shove. "You don't own me *yet*, Mister Roy McArdle!"

"I wasn't doin' nothin'!" Roy protested in astonishment.

"Yeh, I'll see you *don't* do nothin'—not before folks anyhow," Ellie warned him, with an arch and conscious glance at the other young man. Luther laughed obligingly, his white teeth flashing too, and his dark, bright eyes. In the slatternly little sitting-room with the red plush sofa-bedstead, and the blotched wall-paper, and the dusty artificial begonia in a pink and gold stoneware jardiniére, his presence was somehow vivid and disquieting; he furnished as much of a thrill as a hawk in a barnyard. The two women gazed at him, frankly oblivious of all else while Roy's slow look travelled from one to another under his perplexed brows. Luther bore the examination jauntily; he was not at all shy.

"I expec' Roy told you I was all right," he said, bringing out the money. "Anyway, you c'n come on him, in case I git behind with this. Hey, Roy?" He grinned and winked covertly at the others, and Ellie answered with a knowing and confidential grimace, and a significant movement of her eyes toward Roy. Even his best friends could not refrain at times from the rare sport of making a butt of him; the big, clumsy, slow-witted young fellow fairly challenged and invited it.

"How's 'at, Roy? You make it good if this guy ducks out on us?" Ellie asked him.

"Sure! On'y he won't!" Roy asserted stoutly. "Loot's square. I guess I oughta know. Him 'n' me been runnin' t'gether ever since we was kids, ain't we, Loot? I know all his folks, too——" Their shout of laughter interrupted him; he stood again, eyeing them, puzzled

but beginning to smile. In spite of the women-folks' caution which seemed to him entirely feminine and natural, there had been no offense meant or taken, and they were all going to be good friends, Roy opined gravely, with deep pleasure in the prospect.

"Loot ain't no boy name," said Ellie, claiming attention a little insistently as before. She repeated it with exaggerated inflections. *"Loot'! 'Lootie'!* Sounds like a girl. I sh'd think you'd hate being called that."

"Not when you're callin'," said Luther gallantly. "Keep on! You can't make me mad that way!"

"Aw, *you!"* said Ellie, bridling; then she appealed to the other. "Make him quit, Roy!"

"Loot? Quit? Quit what? What's he doin'?"

"Nothin'! Not a blame thing, Roy——!"

"You are *so!* You're kiddin' me! Make him quit it, Roy!"

"Well, I like *that!* Looka here, Roy——!"

There ensued a noisily good-natured bout of pushing, squealing and giggling, diversified with mock slaps and punches; it ended with everybody on the best of terms, and Roy in particular much gratified at the cordial and intimate atmosphere already established, and proud both of his friend and his fiancée. Perhaps, in their private talks, Luther stressed his admiration a little in sheer amiability, but he persuaded himself into believing all or nearly all that he said.

"Why, say, what you mean by hidin' out on me like this? Your girl, I mean?" he demanded with a great show of humorous indignation. "Why, she's a peach! You 'n' y'r talk! Looks like you aim t' keep her t' yourself f'r fair! But you mighta let *me* in before this anyhow. Got any more girls up y'r sleeve? You're such a swell girl-picker, I'll just leave an order with you!"

He kept on, borrowing once in a while from the young gentlemen of Schulte's staff, but with due discrimination; and Roy fended him off happily, foolish and tickled and a little vain.

"I don't know no girls, nor I don't want to, now, of course," he said, sedately. "But Ellie she does. I'll ast her if she can't get hold of somebody mebbe you'd like, Loot—'f you're in earnest 'bout this thing, that is. It would be kinda nice, four of us." And he forthwith consulted her; but, strange to relate, though Miss Siefert had a wide acquaintance amongst young lady Amelians, and at Stein & Merkel's where she worked, and elsewhere, she never would trust her own judgment to make a selection for Luther, even tentatively to fill out a quartette of an evening.

## VI

After six months or so at the garage Luther, in his own estimation, was ready to be graduated with honors; he could recognize the make of an automobile at a glance, he could run anything that went on four wheels, he was capable of disembowelling one and re-assembling it in flawless working-order without any assistance, advice or supervision whatsoever, so detailed and extensive was his knowledge, so masterly his manual skill! As luck would have it, no test of the kind was likely to be applied; the cars were bought and in a certain while discarded upon some system to which Mr. Schulte alone held the key, but that it was an admirably practical system was evidenced by the fact that though they were used to the limit of their endurance, none of them ever needed radical treatment, or failed to bring a fair price when he decided it was time to part with it. In his livery-stable years, seldom had anybody got the better of Emil in a horse-trade, and doubtless the experience then acquired jointly with a fine native gift stood him in good stead now. Luther, unnoticed, tinkering at some small repair to another machine, would sometimes witness a bargaining contest, marvelling and respectful. Buy or sell, it mattered naught what make or style the automobile or what his opponent battled for, Schulte invariably closed the transaction upon his own terms. He never paid a high price, he never took a low one, yet the cars he bought always rendered good service, and

those he sold, if they were on the point of falling down, at least did not fall down until the sale was completed and they were off his premises. Luther promised himself to study this past-master's methods, so as to emulate them in that gilded future when he himself would be head of a similar business enterprise—Nichols' Private Garage and Auto-Livery; the trouble was that he could not make out exactly what Emil Schulte did to keep the concern going; listening with all his ears, watching with all his eyes, he could not make out what magic there was about the other's talk and actions when engineering one of those miraculously successful trades in automobiles. It was the one bit of technique which Luther felt that he had not as yet fully grasped; and that Schulte's peculiar skill evaded study and imitation proved it conclusively to be no skill at all, nothing but a sharp trick, Luther told himself, adding that he had always suspected Schulte of being slick, and this showed him up! That old boat of a Packard, 1908 model, that he worked off the other day for more than he gave for it secondhand! That good-as-new one that he flimflammed the owner into letting go for next to nothing! Luther had stood on market too long Wednesdays and Saturdays the seasons through not to know all the ins and outs of trading, and Schulte couldn't fool *him* the way he fooled these others, the young man thought with a kind of dubious contempt; it didn't take any particular brains, he assured himself vehemently. The only advantages Schulte had were his trickiness, his good clothes, his fancy manners; these were what everybody fell for—everybody but Luther!

However, he was not alone in these opinions; all the young men at the garage held similar ones and vented them at times. To hear their talk, as Luther did constantly, sometimes taking part in it nowadays, you would

have supposed that Schulte existed and ran the place only on suffrance from these brilliant and powerful and indispensable allies. The amazing thing was that they kept the fact from his knowledge so resolutely, for not one of them ever confronted him with it. Contrariwise, the entire set acted as if everyone were afraid of the boss and in his heart of hearts knew it, knew too that he himself was well paid, fairly treated and would not risk losing the job for worlds, partly because it was comparatively easy and pleasant, partly because he lacked the training and general education to do anything else. Luther himself, for all his private swaggering, could not get up the courage to touch Schulte for a raise—to quote the vernacular of the garage. He had to take it out in swaggering with Roy and Ellie, or more frequently Ellie alone, for audience.

They had become very good friends, to Roy's great satisfaction, which he often voiced. "Kinda nice for me you 'n' Ellie, takin' t' each other th' way you have, Loot. I tol' her we was just th' same as brothers, on'y I guess we get along better 'n what brothers gen'ly do. Then, too, I seen men get married, 'n' right away their wives made 'em drop their frien's, looked like," he said, reflectively. "Anyway, th' fellas didn't go t'gether no more, 'n' you can't help thinkin' mebbe her 'n' him didn't agree; 'n' a man's gotta go with his wife, mostly. But don't seem as if we'd ever let anybody come between us, Loot, 'n' besides Ellie wouldn't want to. She's strong f'r you."

"Aw, she just lets on she is because of you," said Luther, squirming in an uneasiness he could not or perhaps would not account for to himself. "Anyway she's all right. You sure got one peach girl, Roy."

These conversations took place in their third-floor

room across the hall from the anarchist lodger. They had two dingy cots, a tottering washstand, a diminutive sheet-iron heater hitched to the gas-bracket by a length of green tubing, and giving forth unholy odours. There were other odours in plenty, of stale clothing and tobacco and soapy water and unaired bedding. No accommodations being provided for their wardrobes—which indeed were anything but elaborate—Roy kept his in a valise under the bed, and Luther had a trunk inlaid with metallic panels resembling an assemblage of nutmeg-graters. It contained an assortment of garments including his Sunday suit with which he was beginning to be actively dissatisfied; there were also some photographs—his father and mother, the Teeter family in a group, Gus and Hermann taken ten years ago when they were young fellows. "Don't them moustaches look funny, though!" Ellie ejaculated upon coming to these last. "I ain't hardly ever seen a man with one on. They sure do look country, all of 'em, don't they?" she commented, surveying the collection with a not unkind amusement and curiosity mingled. "You can tell 'em from folks in the city right off." Luther put the pictures away after that; he never showed them to anyone again. To be sure he had few friends intimate enough to deserve the privilege.

Roy more than once suggested that some Sunday he and Luther charter an automobile—opportunities at bargain-rates to an employee were frequent around the garage—and, Luther driving, take Ellie out to the Pike, "t' see all th' folks," and Ellie welcomed the proposal warmly; an auto-ride to any old place, she said, appealed to her, and she guessed they had dandy eats, chicken and milk and things right out of the garden, didn't they? But somehow the Sunday never came. It is the severe lot of purveyors to the public convenience and entertain-

ment to have to work their hardest when everybody else is on a holiday; and Sundays, Luther pointed out, there was often more business at Schulte's than during all the rest of the week. He did not like to ask for time off, and leave the work to pile up on the other fellows; of course he might, and Schulte wouldn't make any objection for fear of starting something, but he, Luther, wouldn't feel right to do it—not for the whole day, anyhow. Going to the ball-game was different; that only took a couple of hours, and he was always back on the job the minute it was over. Better wait till he got his vacation; then he'd drive them out any time they said, but right now—and so on, and so on. The arguments gathered strength and conviction as he went along until at the end he was as disappointed as the other two, while understanding and approving his own handsomely conscientious attitude as did they. In strictly candid moments he told himself that there was no real need for him to go out home; he heard from the folks and wrote to them all the time—well, not exactly all the time, but every now and then. He saw one or another of them on market often—well, perhaps not often, but once in a while. He was not missed; they were getting along first-rate, much better without him than with him; even Hermann was at any rate no worse; should anything happen, they would send for him at once. They knew he kept pretty busy, and did not have much time for writing or visiting, and —and—and here Luther generally gave up, and went to thinking about something more agreeable.

The hours at the garage were so arranged that he did not have to get up until some while later than Roy who must be at his stockyards betimes; and notwithstanding the devotion to duty which, as stated above, kept him pegging away, foregoing even those rare and brief inter-

vals of recreation to which he was entitled, Luther habitually dawdled in bed up to the last possible moment. Dressing was not so expeditious a matter now as it had been in Deercreek days, but on the other hand, breakfast could be disposed of with the speed of light; of the scant fifteen minutes he allowed for both operations and the dash from Amelia Street to Schulte's, by far the greater half went to his toilette. He would be leaving the house at about the same time as numbers of employes of the down-town shops and offices, mostly girls, though there was a fair sprinkling of young fellows like himself, shipping-clerks and desk-men of every grade; they walked to save car-fare, and carried their lunches, or bought slabs of milk-chocolate in lieu thereof, or went without altogether in the same laudable purpose. Luther remembered them flowing through market in the old days with a certain shrinking at the possibility of the recollection being mutual; but he was never identified, though he established a sort of half-way acquaintance amongst them in these day-after-day encounters.

Daily also to fall in with Ellie, coming and going, was a natural occurrence. Any morning they might happen to start out together; and in the evening they almost invariably ran into each other at the corner of Poplar two squares above Nine-Sixty-One, unless Ellie had been detained at Stein's where there were periodical rush seasons, too. At such times she did not get home until long after the supper-hour, fagged out, with ringed eyes, ready to drop into the folding-bed; Ellie was a vigorous and unsparing worker and cherished ambitions connected with the wholesale millinery business which, however, she warily kept under cover when in masculine society. Men did not like girls to be too well up in business matters, she reasoned; and accordingly strove with might

and main to behave as if she had not an idea—about business or anything else—in her head, especially in Luther's company. They greeted with giggles and sidelong glances: "Why, look, who's here!" "Say, ain't we met before?"—and strolled the remaining distance not too fast, with a lively exchange of the variety of attack and riposte they called kidding, all the way. Luther assured himself, as he assured Roy, as he would have assured anyone freely and openly that Ellie Siefert was one peach girl; not such a swell looker—he did not claim that, he would admit liberally. Those teeth, for instance! But they were not false, like her mother's, it seemed; they were bridged in, five or six of the front ones; it was not quite the same as out-and-out false teeth, somehow. Of course, they were a drawback—Ellie couldn't win on points, he thought, borrowing from Schulte's sporting vocabulary with a grin—but after all, a person's teeth did not show much, and otherwise when she got herself dolled up with stuff on her face the way girls did, and her hair fixed and everything, Ellie could get by in any crowd. She could get by, in fact, much better than Roy, Luther thought not without sympathy for her; Roy was all right, but Luther could see that Ellie would like him to have more style about him. Any girl liked a fellow she went with to have style; you could tell it by the way they looked at you.

Very likely at this point the young gentlemen directed a not unfavorable eye upon his own reflection in the glass; and he may have proceeded to some exercises in mental arithmetic, footing up his assets in comparison with the cost of, say, one of those two-pant suits Krohn was advertising. He had the needful fifteen dollars; he had twenty-seven-thirty, to be exact; but Luther was Mrs. Hilda Nichols's own son. It would take more than

a half-year or so of Schulte's Garage to oust the habit of tenacious economy in which he had been trained. Who will say that it was not a good habit? If Alvin and Hilda were a little close-fisted, they were none the less upright, sensible people whose live-within-your-means and pay-as-you-go creed commands respect; and Luther, with all his young man's instabilities, was a credit to them. He put aside temptation wistfully but with finality. Avaunt, Krohn, with your insidious two-pant offerings! Luther was firmly resolved to wait until he had fifty dollars laid by before embarking on purely decorative expenditures; even the novelties in shirts, socks and neckwear on view at the garage every day and the subject of much earnest study and discussion could not entice him from the path of caution.

About this time certain events coming to pass in Europe began to take up space on the front page of the morning paper; ere long they monopolized it all, spread to the next one, necessitated extras. Liége, the Emden, Mons, the Falkland Islands, the war in the air, the war on land, the war under seas, crowded all other public matters off the stage, or at least into positions of minor importance, even in the opinion of Amelia Street and Schulte's Garage. They were not so much interested as excited; secure in isolation, their enjoyment of the thrill was augmented by the fact that it cost nothing. No one cared about the outcome of the struggle, practically no one took sides. They read the daily reports with an avid interest, not in victories and defeats, but in the spectacularly monstrous and hideous details of their enactment. Many, perhaps most of them, bore German names, or like Luther had a strain of German in the blood, had used the language familiarly at home in childhood, and retained scraps of it still, but the gen-

eration of emigrants from whom they were descended had all but passed away, and those that lingered here and there had become sufficiently Americanized to scoff at the notion of contributing either money or personal effort towards the cause of the Fatherland. They would go to church and to the maennerchor and sing *Ein feste Burg* and *hoch der kaiser* lustily, but: "You think I dig up for them dam' fools? *Nein!* My money for myselluf I make it!' old Michael Nagel, Hilda's last living brother, remarked scornfully. Indeed, he gave rather gingerly even to the Red Cross and other organizations which now began to be active in works of mercy and charity designed to benefit all the combatants alike. People, on the whole, exhibited a sort of tepid good-will towards them; and presently the streets flowered with variegated knitting-bags and Ellie Siefert was purling and throwing on and binding off with the rest of the girls. Their enthusiastic industry was no more inspired by sympathy than their reading of the papers; the word had gone about that it was "stylish" to carry a bag and knit, and that sufficed them.

As time went by, however, the huge current of the war that, we may well believe, left undisturbed no single existence on this planet, finally sent a ripple of its backwash into Luther's tiny corner. There were changes at the garage; weekly new faces appeared among the mechanics and chauffeurs, replacing familiar ones which were understood to be now gracing the tool-works, the aviation hangars, the munitions factories. Tall stories about wages got into circulation. Schulte sat between the calendar and the cuspidor, moody-browed, answering hitherto unheard-of complaints over the telephone with soothing and apologetic words. You might hear him explaining that good help was very scarce, that his

men were the best to be had, that he had always kept up a high standard but that it was getting harder and harder, that he was sorry the service didn't satisfy, but that he would guarantee nobody could do better anywhere else, etc., etc.; and often at the conclusion of these honeyed arguments, Emil would give vent to a hearty curse, slamming up the instrument and shoving it aside. The times were out of joint for honest gentlemen in the garage and auto-livery profession. When he stalked upon his rounds nowadays he could recognize among the hands only one or two who had been with him when Luther came, older men who could not afford adventure; and in place of the smart, sprag, commendably "nifty" young drivers of a year ago, alack, what a hit-or-miss crew now met his sour survey! Their general style may be inferred from the fact that Luther was distinguishably above the average, instead of below it.

This must have been among the considerations that moved Mr. Schulte one day, after a prolonged telephone conference, to step out of the office and sending a purposeful glance about the place, to beckon an underling and order him to hunt up Nichols, with a further recommendation to get a move on! Luther crawled out from under the car whose vitals he was just then engaged with, and made his way to the managerial presence, accounting to himself for the hurry of the summons on the theory that one of the machines was in trouble somewhere, and wanted a tow; he was nowise put out by the distasteful eye the other turned on his smeared and sweaty figure, nor did he at once detect in Schulte's address an artificial geniality sufficiently foreign to it.

" 'Lo, Luther! I got a change of jobs for you. Like t' drive for once?"

"Aw ri'!" said Luther, in entire good faith on his side. "Soon's I c'n crank up th' flivver. Where's th' machine at? Th' one that's lay down, I mean?"

"There ain't any machine lay down," said Schulte. "This is a straight driving job." And as Luther stared in blank and incredulous astonishment, he almost smiled, reiterating explanatorily: "It's a driving job. I want you to drive somebody."

Luther recovered himself. "Aw ri'!" he said again, with a mighty effort at composure and negligence; successful enough, it yet did not escape Schulte's sharp observation and had the odd effect of encouraging him momentarily. Emil was no poor student of human nature, or at least of young man nature, in his way. He thought with resignation that this one might not be so bad; you never can tell.

"Got any clothes?" he asked distrustfully.

"Naw—none of my own. But there's always some erroun' that th' bunch ain't wearin'. I c'n git me a outfit, 'if I pick 'em over," said Luther confidently.

This readiness and resource further confirmed Mr. Schulte's judgment; but it was in his character to take no chances—as he himself might have said. "You gotta shave and get washed up. Go in the shower, y' know——?"

"Sure!" said Luther without resentment. Intimate personal advice of this nature was nothing out of the way from Schulte; and for that matter, had Luther been ordered to go through fire instead of water, he would scarcely have objected. He was too jubilantly excited at the prospect of driving, and at the same time too anxious about betraying that very excitement.

"No hurry," said the boss, arresting his movement with a gesture, "Y' ain't wanted till this evening—din-

ner-time. You call it supper-time, I guess," he interpolated patronizingly. "Around seven o'clock."

"Aw ri'!" said Luther, impervious of countenance as before; and again Mr. Schulte noted this Indian assumption of *sang-froid* with a hesitating relief.

"You can take your time and get fixed up. Then you come back here, and I'll tell you where you're to go. You wanta run out that there big new car, that Acme I bought off of that swell Meigs outfit on the North Hill the other day—you know? Is she all right? I ain't going to take no chances on boobing this thing."

"She ain't been took out yet, but there ain't nothin' out o' whack with her. Anyways I'll look her over good," Luther promised him competently. "There won't nothin' get by *me*."

"That's right," said his employer, with approval. "Hold on——" And once more he detained the young man, this time with a manner nicely balanced between the threatening and the confidential. "You don't need to do any talking, y' understand, Luther. What the other guys don't know won't hurt 'em, huh?"

"Aw ri'!" The other let him go at last, looking after him still doubtfully, but with a dawning hope.

If he had only known it, Mr. Schulte might have spared his warnings. Luther's own naïve conceptions of seemly and sophisticated conduct enjoining a close-mouthed discretion about this as about other business. He went back and, whistling the while, set to sorting the garage wardrobe of left-over or forgotten garments in so leisurely and accustomed a style as to deflect curiosity. The others, though up till now they had seen him acting only in the capacity of mechanic and utility-man, did not question his assignment to this new role which automatically elevated him to their company. As

has already been hinted they were not so fastidious as their predecessors, and hence not nearly so inclined to criticize such a promotion. They observed him with but an idle interest, and inquiry went no farther than an occasional: "Hello, you going to drive?" Luther assented, carefully affecting indifference; it was something of a feat, considering the anxiety actually besetting him as he rummaged, compared and selected. In the end, after making the thorough toilette Schulte had recommended, when he examined himself in the glass, he found the results startlingly gratifying. It was all he could do to keep up his nonchalant pose; he wished ardently that Ellie could see him. To be sure there were some stains on the breeches, and the coat was fraying away rather alarmingly from the underarm seams; he had no gloves, and the cap was just enough too small to bind cruelly around the temples; but the gaiters were practically new, and trimly adjusted to Luther's conspicuously trim and shapely calves, set off the entire costume. Swaggering ever so little, yet avoiding exaggeration with an instinctive consciousness of what was becoming to him, he again presented himself before Schulte, and experienced another thrill of innocent vanity at the latter's surprise. If a species of left-handed compliment, it was nevertheless a compliment.

"Why, Loot, I didn't reckonize you for a minute, you look so dam' nifty!" said Mr. Schulte, recovering; and inspected him anew from top to toe quite paternally pleased. "I've seen better get-ups, but for the spur of the moment, as you might say, you done first-rate. Machine all o. k.?"

"Yeh, I give her th' once-over."

Schulte's eyes moved from the Acme to Luther in slow

and minute appraisal; he deliberated, shifting the cigar in the corner of his mouth by expert contractions of the facial muscles. "Well, now——" he halted, deliberating again. "This party you're to drive for—I wouldn't wonder if you knew him. It's Dalton. Jack Dalton."

"Naw, I don't," said Luther. "I seen him times, of course. But I ain't ever met him to talk to."

At another moment Mr. Schulte might have had difficulty to suppress his amusement at so ingenuous an admission, but just now he was too seriously concerned. "I don't mean know him *that* way," he said impatiently. "I mean you know who he is. My lord, everybody in this town oughta know who Jack Dalton is!"

"Yeah, sure! Sure I know who he is. I thought that's what you meant," Luther said hastily. In reality he had, like the rest of the community, the dimmest ideas as to who Mr. Jack Dalton was and what he was. The only facts of his career known with certainty were that he had at one time been councilman from the Thirteenth Ward, and that he was now out of office and advertised to be "out of politics" altogether. Notwithstanding, people in general persisted in referring to him as a political leader—excepting those who referred to him as a political boss or a gangster or even by names less nice. The world is very censorious. He and Schulte had had a pleasant acquaintance for years; Emil was a broad-minded man—probably a livery-stable proprietor has to be!—and himself honest enough.

"Yeh, I expect you musta seen Dalton round here once in a while," he now said. "Well, it's him you're driving for—him and a lady." Mr. Schulte paused, eyeing Luther hard and speculatively. "Dalton's kinda choos-y. That's the reason I want things done right.

And on account of the lady, too—they notice everything, y'know. You're to call at Dalton's place for him, and he'll tell you where to go after that. All you gotta do is take his orders. But—er—make it snappy, y'know, Luther. Put on all the dog you know how," said his employer, earnestly. "Here now, lemme see you get down off that seat and open the door!"

Luther, wondering greatly but warily inexpressive, did as he was directed—did it several times, in fact, until Mr. Schulte appeared to be measurably satisfied. "That's good enough—anyhow, it's got to do," he said grudgingly. "Now how d'you act when Dalton speaks to you? Or the lady? What are you going to do, hey? Naw, you don't take off your hat, you big fish!" said Mr. Schulte in savage disgust. "Who d'you think you are? You don't know her, and she'll never know *you* in a thousand years! You s'lute, that's what you do. Put up your hand! Here, this way! Well, what 'smatter? Got saluter's elbow or somepin all of a sudden? Can't make your arm work, huh?"

"Aw, it makes me feel like a fool!" Luther mumbled, scarlet with self-consciousness and offended pride. "It's —it's sissy!"

"Sissy, huh? Where d'you get that stuff? You done so much driving for the stylish crowd you know all about it, don't you?" said Schulte in acid irony. "Less see you do it once anyhow—if you *can!*"

Thus challenged, Luther executed the required gesture in a dumb fury; and all at once, Schulte's countenance cleared. He became again the benignant patron, pleased and of good counsel. "That's all right! That's fine!" he said admiringly. "Tell you what, Loot, in a little while you'll be giving the whole bunch cards and

spades. Seems like it comes natural to you. Some of 'em *never* learn. You can't put it into a man—style, I mean, you know. He's gotta have *something* of his own!" And while Luther stood before him, still red and ruffled and uneasily suspicious yet yielding insensibly to the magic of these blandishments, his senior removed the cigar and delivered a little homily for his information and guidance like a garage-and-auto-livery Polonius.

"Y'see, it's this way, Luther. This swell trade ain't a bit folks-y, and you don't want ever to start in and try to get folks-y with 'em, see? They don't give two whoops who you are, and come right down to the point, *you* don't who *they* are. That's fair enough, ain't it? Looks is all they think about, and all you need to think about. Take, f'r instance: you're not worrying your head about Jack Dalton, but all the same if you gotta drive, you'd a whole lot rather drive for a fella that's a nifty dresser and lots of dough, and a swell little Jane on the side, wouldn't you? Well, same way he likes a classy car and a classy shuff and everything done in style. Otherwise he don't know you're on earth, and he don't care. Why should he? Why should *you?* Now Jack ain't exactly s'ciety," said Mr. Schulte, exhibiting admirable judgment, "but there ain't much difference when you get up in the moneyed crowd. I got a pretty good line on 'em, all the years I been in this business, and looks like I done fairly good at it, huh? Looks like I'd oughta know what I'm talking about, huh? You can take it from me, Loot, as long as you put up a good front, and get some style to you, you're all right. This swell North Hill trade I got, f'r instance, they ain't hiring friends, they're hiring shuffoors, and all they want

is for you to look stylish and act stylish like I been showing you. When you're at home, you can take and belt your wife over the head, or lay round drunk all day, or do any man dirt you feel like; and so can they! But on *top* and everywhere it *shows* you gotta be stylish. That's all there is to it!"

## VII

Mr. Dalton kept an office for the forwarding of those hazy activities which everybody knew about, and nobody could define. It was in the Kremlin Building, whither Luther now drove, bringing the car up before the entrance with a neat and expert flourish, as he saw his fare awaiting him. At that hour of the evening, the population of the offices and indeed of the block had already scattered homewards or dinnerwards; but even in a crowd Mr. Dalton's figure would have been more or less conspicuous. Seldom had Luther beheld so *recherché* a masculine toilette, and had it not been for Schulte's counsels and those of his own native caution, he might have stared in undue appreciation of the ex-politician's modish suit, his incomparably well-assorted waistcoat and tie and slashing soft hat. It was perfection; and Dalton who was a big, heavy-set man with strong features, a black moustache in the style of his forty-odd years and a pair of flat light blue eyes steady and expressionless as a bird's—Dalton carried all this fashion well enough; he was no tailor's dummy. Moreover, contrary to what might have been expected, he turned out agreeably democratic, New York top-coat and all.

"Car from Schulte's?" he inquired, as Luther, reddening a little but mindful of orders, sprang down and opened the door with a hand to his cap; and so far from betraying amusement or scorn at this piece of fancy behaviour as the young man had more than half feared

he would, his scrutiny and manner indicated approval if anything. Mr. Dalton's was not a speaking countenance. "'S all right, I'll get in here," he said, waving aside Luther's mute proffer of the tonneau; and mounted to the front seat, a whiff of scent, faint, exquisite and costly tickling Luther's nostrils in the act. He sure was dressed to kill, the latter said to himself with the half scoffing admiration and envy and respect of American youth; but he kept a face as impassive as Dalton's own.

"Know the Turkeytrot Inn? Across the river out there in the hills back of Fort William?"

"Yes, sir," said Luther, inwardly thanking his lucky stars. He had heard about the Turkeytrot Inn—everybody had heard about it. But Luther's information came unexpurgated from his sister, the Teeter farm being in that neighbourhood and nowise enhanced in value, according to Maggie's scandalized reports, by the location. Owing to this fact, however, Luther knew the road well, whereas he might have been somewhat put to it had Dalton pitched on some other roadhouse; up to this date, Mr. Nichols had had no opportunities for familiarizing himself with roadhouses.

"That's where I want to go," Dalton said. "Only first we got to stop for a lady. You drive round here to——" he named a drug-store eight or ten squares away. It was in another forsaken, retiring, unostentatious locality, but Luther, who by this time could find his way anywhere in the city, piloted the machine thither with unhesitating directness. He would have liked better for the appointment to have taken them somewhere down town among the theatres and hotels and the busy, crowded traffic where he might have had a chance to show off his pre-eminent skill and abilities as a chauffeur in the sight of the great man; this was too easy,

he thought discontentedly, knowing himself to be on trial, but nevertheless in returning and abundant self-confidence. And he rounded to before the gaudy lights of the drug-store, and again performed Schulte's monkey-like drill—as it had erstwhile seemed to him—this time with the zest of conscious smartness.

The only noticeable thing about the lady, in Luther's opinion, was that she was actually on time! She came out of the triangular vestibule, wearing a large, drooping hat and a veil, and with thick furs about her shoulders so that, upon an ordinary casual survey one could scarcely have said what she looked like, or recognized her at another encounter, though there was youth in her movements and the gracious lines of her figure. Dalton alighted; had it been any other man on earth, Luther would have judged him to be ever so slightly and subtly excited. He took her hand, and she giggled, murmured inarticulately, glanced at Luther. He had a flashing glimpse of her small face with very red lips, very pink and velvety cheeks, darting bright eyes dextrously shadowed—and then the dark interior of the limousine absorbed them, and he slammed the door and jumped up to his own seat dashingly. After that, the road demanded all his attention—almost all. He was not so devoted to business but that he could still spare a thought to the appearance and impression Luther Nichols was making; and upon resuming the wheel, after pausing to pay at the toll-house this end of the Kentucky Bridge, he caught a chirrup from amongst the lady's other chirrupings which had been discreetly inaudible so far. "My, what a zippy chauffeur we got, Jack! Did you pick him out? Well, sa-ay——" The rest was lost, though Luther strained his ears which were tingling with satisfaction.

Nothing about the environment or exterior of the Inn bore out its unhallowed reputation; the place, once a handsome plantation, was not improbably more quiet on the surface, at least, than during old pre-Secession days of slaves, profusion and fiery gentility. One approached by way of an unkempt avenue of trees, at the end whereof it loomed, a fine pillared mansion in the southern architectural taste, with outbuildings stretching to the rear, in one of which Luther was directed to put up the Acme. There were several other cars but no chauffeurs. Sauntering back, he found a considerable activity of negro cooks and waiters in the kitchen and more in the bar; most of the windows, upstairs and down, showed lights, and there was a good deal of talk and laughter behind closed doors, but on the whole a most unsensational decorum prevailed. Dalton and the lady had disappeared. Luther loitered around the lofty halls and porticoes, not quite knowing what to do with himself; he had not been provided with either money or advice against the contingency of being stranded high and dry in such a resort, hungry with the smell of dinner under his nose, thirsty with good beer and Bourbon, to say nothing of choicer beverages, flowing freely before him. Apparently the idea was that he could stable himself along with the automobile until such time as he was needed again! In fact, he had made up his mind to this course, and was reluctantly straying toward the barnyard garage, not without a slowly kindling resentment against Dalton, when one of the darkies came up with the intimation that order had been taken for his comfort; and the ex-councilman was rehabilitated like magic. Luther had his dinner and a stein with it at one end of a table in the main dining-room, where he sat solitary among vistas of old-fashioned mirrors, chan-

deliers and white woodwork. It was chilly, silent and depressingly lonesome, though there were noise and conviviality enough elsewhere, what with corks going off, tableware rattling, the hurrying passage of servants, and here and there some viewless Turkeytrotter in one of the private rooms gradually waxing louder, livelier and more mirthful. Luther would willingly have fraternized with the coloured helotry, but met with no encouragement, or rather with a defeating civility; the average African may be relied upon for peculiar discretion in certain circumstances, and always for an uncanny sense of caste. Between the establishment's white patrons and black servitors there seemed to be no place for Luther; forgotten or unnoticed he idled through the time like a man isolated from his kind in some enchantment, finally stretching out on a bench in a corner and falling asleep and waking and falling asleep again for what seemed endless hours, a lifetime, an eternity.

He was aroused at last out of bottomless unconsciousness by the familiar sound of an automobile backfiring, mingled confusedly with other sounds even more boisterous and explosive, and by a hand on his shoulder shaking him none too gently; a mulatto face emerged from the dissolving fragments of his dreams and remained whole and stationary above him. "Tumble out, boy! Git a hurry on! Yo' boss waitin'!" said the apparition, jogging him to and fro.

Luther sat up, staring sleepily; for an instant he could not remember where he was, then Dalton came back into his mind. "Huh? Uh? Are they through?" he asked vaguely, and was brought broad awake by the other's guffaw of laughter.

"Ah guess so. Hit all depen's!" said he mysteriously. "Anyways yo' want to wa'm up yo ca'—Yah, yah, yah!"

Again he laughed; the last Luther, departing, saw of him, he had called some fellow attendant to share the joke, and they were yah-yahing together prodigiously.

Outside, day was breaking, but it was still dark; the automobile recently stalled had just got under way and was lurching dizzily down the road with a loud crew of revellers. "Them fellers is good and soused!" Luther thought contemptuously. He brought his own machine around, wondering if Dalton would be in like shape, and was relieved to discover him at the top of the majestic flight of steps, puffy-eyed and perhaps not quite so point-de-vise in attire as before, but perfectly steady on his feet and clear of utterance, the lady clinging to his arm.

The car was silent on the trip back to town; Luther, for his part, felt fresh and sprightly now that he was thoroughly awake, and gave as good an exhibition of driving as before, uncertainly aware all the while that his passengers were paying no attention to him. The feeling crept upon him that they were not paying much attention to each other; sitting dumb and preoccupied behind him they somehow filled the air with urgency. It was as if their unspoken desire pressed tangibly upon his shoulders, hurrying him along; to satisfy it he put on all the speed he dared; the Acme skimmed the road at a mad gait. They left the open country, passed Fort William, spun through the streets of the little Kentucky town, dodging milkmen and morning-paper dispensers by hairbreadth margins. Luther had the sensation of racing against an invisible but menacing adversary; he was beating as they neared the Bridge.

"Less of it, son!" said Dalton in his ear. "Better go easy now. In the country it didn't matter. Listen: after we get across, you don't want to go back there

where we picked up the lady, you know. I'll tell you where to go, see?"

Luther obeyed, his mind on the wheel. He was not at all interested in the lady and did not care where they had picked up or would get rid of her—in point of fact he scarcely troubled to notice. He zigzagged among the streets at Dalton's direction, at last halting not before a house but on the way to one of the hill-top suburbs at the entrance to some little public park. The couple bade each other good-bye in few words; Luther heard something said about telephoning; and Dalton climbed up beside him and lit a cigar. He gave Luther the name of a Fourth Street hotel.

Daylight was growing so fast by the time they reached it that the electric lights looked pale; the taxis and omnibuses that served the early trains were beginning to be busy; the night-force in the rotunda and about the desks and corridors was yawningly making ready for its rest. The porter knew Dalton, and motioned away the boy who came looking for baggage; and the big man clambered down, fishing in his pocket. He held something towards Luther.

"Mr. Schulte said let it go on the bill. He said it would be all right——" Luther began.

"Yeah, I know. Here——!" He found himself with the money wadded into the palm of his hand, and Dalton walked away. It must be stated with regret that Luther did not appreciate the finished tact of the performance; he thought that Dalton had not understood but hesitated to call or run after him; and in that second of irresolution the chance passed. Dalton entered the first elevator he came to in the lobby, and was at once whisked aloft whither Luther had not the courage to follow. He deliberated for another second or so, at

length deciding to take the car back to the garage and get a few winks more of sleep before the regular workday began. There was a ratty old lounge in the locker-room where the night-men spent their intervals of rest, but they would have gone home by this hour. Schulte came down between eight and nine o'clock, by which time Luther calculated, as he wound through the awakening streets, he himself would have had his nap and gotten back into overalls as usual. He thought of those overalls with distaste and a dawning hope that after this successful exploit as stop-gap or temporary chauffeur he might be promoted to a permanency. Schulte's manner had hinted as much; and Mr. Dalton appeared satisfied as near as Luther could judge. It was hard to tell anything about Dalton, he reflected in the cold of the little locker-room, before committing himself to slumber rolled up in an old carriage-robe; and he got out the bill in some curiosity. It was twenty-five dollars.

The discovery effectually banished every inclination to sleep. He sat down on the lounge, smoothing out the piece of paper, studying it puzzled, actually alarmed. The longer he looked the less he knew what to make of it. Twenty-five dollars! It might or might not cover the cost of the outfit and excursion; Schulte charged a flat rate, so much for running, so much for standing time, and there were no meters on his cars. Luther had often heard him stress the point that this omission was intentional, carefully designed to contribute to the general niftiness, and the desirable air of being private equipages. Certainly the Acme must have done a good twenty-five dollars' worth of running and standing, Luther thought, but no sane man would hand over twenty-five dollars merely on that supposition. It crossed his mind that the money was intended for him-

self, only for the notion to be dismissed as too preposterous; no sane man would hand over so abnormal a tip either—not if he knew it, that is. That, Luther said to himself with a regretful grin, fingering the bill wistfully, that must be exactly what was the matter! Mr. Dalton did not know it; he had slipped it off his roll without taking a second look; he had made a serious mistake, and now what was he, Luther, to do?

Obviously to return the money before Dalton missed it, if possible, at any rate before he came around asking questions of Schulte, was the best course. Not only would it put to rout ugly suspicions, but in Luther's own language it would make him solid with both Dalton and his employer. They might have made some bargain for all he knew; that was none of his business; the only thing he could be sure of was that here was twenty-five dollars which had been given him by mistake, and that if he gave it back of his own accord, without having to be told or ordered to, he would be in a safe position and, what was more, a very becoming one. He reviewed this reasoning with no little complacency, admiring his own astuteness as much as his honesty.

He betowed the bill in security, and after a while changed into the contemned overalls and went back to work, expecting momentarily to be called to the office to confront Dalton or answer him over the telephone; and he framed speeches in which he would frustrate the inquiry or accusation, whichever form it took. But the morning wore along, and nothing happened. Even Schulte did not visit the shop as usual, and it bye and bye transpired that he had gone out of town to an automobile show up in Dayton—an accident which Luther could not but regard as fortunate. Emil might have called for his report, and he would not have been ready;

he wanted most emphatically to give that money back to Dalton in person, he did not want to turn it in to Schulte. The whole affair made him nervous; he felt as if he could not rest until it was done and over with—and it seemed as if quitting-time would never come. He thought desperately of calling up Dalton's office and making an appointment, but came to the conclusion that that would be altogether too "nervy"; he must take his chance of finding the great man in, and willing to see him. Luther was tolerably confident upon the latter point, however, such was the magnitude of the sum involved. It was inconceivable that Dalton would refuse to see anyone whom he might reasonably suspect of knowing something about his twenty-five dollars.

Putting on his everyday clothes when the factory-whistles blew, he was so struck by the unfavorable change they made in his appearance as to linger over them in an indecision which might have resulted in his boldly and unwarrantably assuming the borrowed plumage of yesterday, had it been available. But alas, it was already separated into its component parts and dispersed, leggings here, cap there, among the other men; impossible to reassemble it! Twenty-four hours earlier Luther could not have been brought to believe that he would ever look upon those uniforms and the subservience they symbolized with smarting envy and desire. He was scornfully certain that not one of the fellows had ever been commented on as zippy—*that* bunch! He burned to demonstrate before them what real style in driving and door-opening and saluting was. And if he carried so well the patchwork equipment, what effect might he not produce in one of his own, or at least adjusted to his measure, complete in all its details! Now he must present himself before a critic like Dalton in old clothes which he bitterly

pronounced to be a bum cut and a bum fit and a bum piece of goods and everything else that was bum: Luther warned himself gloomily that it was quite possible Dalton would not recognize him.

He was mistaken; Jack Dalton was not the man to forget anybody. Nor was he so unapproachable as might have been inferred from the expensive and imposing character of his surroundings. Luther inquired his way through the tiled, marbled, and wrought-ironed precincts of the Kremlin Building and found a door of formal aspect whereon the name of J. Dalton as Business-Agent of the Federation of Draymen and Allied Trades was set forth in black lettering on a panel of wrinkled glass; he was in the act of rapping a shade timidly when there slouched out some federated drayman or follower of an allied trade—presumably—who, instead of passing on, gave him a look up and down and asked what he wanted.

"I'd—I'd like t' see Mr. Dalton——" Luther faltered, taken aback for an instant; and as the other eyed him over again in not too reassuring a fashion, he hastily launched into explanations. "It's kinda important—it's about some money——"

*"Oh!* Sure!" And forthwith, to Luther's astonishment, the representative of allied trades who, to tell the truth, did not give the impression of representing any trade least of all any honest one, jerked open the door again, thrust his head around it and bawled out: "Hey, Jack, here's a guy t' see youse!" There was no audible response, but perhaps some signal from inside, for he almost at once withdrew his head, and nodded at Luther, holding the door ajar. "'S all ri', bo! G'wan in!"

The door banged; Luther advanced gingerly, though unimpeded. The small room was bare of desks, filing-cabinets or book-cases; a fine, full-bodied aroma of whis-

key and tobacco very compactly occupied not only whatever cubic feet might have been allotted to office furniture but every intervening space. In the midst of it were a chair and table, and Dalton sat in one with his heels on the other, and his hat pushed well back, smoking a cigar and reading the afternoon paper. He lowered it a trifle, looking over the top at Luther; then lowered it more.

"I—I don't know if you rec'lec', Mr. Dalton, I'm—I druv you last night——"

"I remember you," said Dalton, not encouragingly, not discouragingly; his flat, light-blue stare dwelt on Luther without wavering; it did not even suggest curiosity. Luther, in some relief, interpreted this emotionless and uninquiring attitude to indicate that the other had not yet missed the money, or had accounted for it otherwise. It was with much greater confidence and fluency that he began again. "Why, say, Mr. Dalton, you know that there bill you give me—that there twenty-five, you know ——? I guess you didn't mean to gimme that, did you?" He paused on an interrogative inflection, but as Dalton said nothing, reiterated, unconsciously raising his voice in his anxiety to be explicit: "You give me a twenty-five, Mr. Dalton, you know—only I guess maybe you *didn't* know; or you didn't mean to, anyhow. It was this morning right just as you was goin' inta th' Hotel Preston—right just as we got there. I says Schulte says t' let it go on th' bill, 'n' I guess you didn't notice what I says, or maybe you didn't hear, because you give me a twenty-five——"

"You've said that before. I heard you the first time. You can quit that hollerin'. I ain't deaf," said Dalton. His voice and manner were unchanged, but they arrested Luther as would have a dash of ice-water in his face.

"I give you twenty-five dollars," said Dalton, after a long moment. And, after another long moment: "Well?" he said, though scarcely with interrogation.

Luther stood before him, momentarily incapable of speech, so disconcerting was this reception of his well-meant effort. His mind voyaged up and down in vacancy, groping for another set of words wherewith to explain; but none were forthcoming; he was reduced at last to blurting out a stark statement which he had previously considered but rejected for tactlessness, intimating as it did that the great man was as culpably negligent as any little man. "Why, I—I guess you made a mistake—I guess you didn't go to give me a twenty-five——"

"I didn't make any mistake," said Dalton. He very deliberately shifted his feet to the floor, but without further movement, or the slightest disarrangement of his features, and in the same even tone applied to the astounded young man an epithet of incomparable vileness. "See here, you——! I gave you twenty-five, and that's all you're going to get. If you think you can come round here holding *me* up, you can think again and get outa here while you're doing it. See?"

He wound up with another finished piece of blasphemy and obscenity combined; but Luther scarcely heard it. From the fog of his bewilderment there emerged only the idea—itself formless, ready to disintegrate!—that Dalton must have missed the money after all, and have "had it in" for him all this while. The simplest reasoning would have demolished this theory in a twinkle, but Luther at the moment could not reason; he was in a panic of terrified honesty. He gasped and stuttered among denials, excuses, explanations, fumbling for the bill and pulling it out and shoving it towards this pow-

erful, offended being in abject eagerness to get rid of it and clear himself. "My God, Mr. Dalton, I couldn't help it! Honest t' God, I couldn't help it! I couldn't git here no sooner—I been at th' garage all day—you can ast 'em if I ain't been there workin' all day—you just ast 'em if I ain't! I'd 'a' brung it back right off, soon's I seen how much it was, on'y I had t' stay with th' job, you know. You know how that is. I gotta stay with th' job. 'F I'd 'a' looked right off when you give it t' me, I'd 'a' went right up in th' hotel after you, but I didn't look—honest t' God, I never noticed till afterwards, 'n' then I couldn't git off t' come here—honest t' God, Mr. Dalton, it was just like I'm tellin' you—I meant t' bring it back all along—I wouldn't go t' keep no money that was give me that way—I—I——" he pleaded in desperation; the sweat stood on his forehead.

Dalton could not have made much out of the wild gabbling; but the sight of the bill visibly wrought upon him, and what was more not unfavorably. Money talks! The twenty-five advanced an intelligible argument on Luther's side far surpassing his own frenzied effort. He came to a halt in sheer lack of breath; and Dalton picked up the bill and turned it over and looked at Luther and back again to the bill with a studious and meditative scrutiny. He rubbed his chin; he rubbed the back of his head, pushing his hat askew to do so. Perhaps this contributed to the subtle mellowing change presently manifest in his aspect; at any rate he was pronouncedly less sinister.

"You thought you'd bring this back, huh?"

"Yes, sir, on'y I couldn't git here no sooner—I'd 'a' come right away 'f I coulda got off from th' shop——"

"Schulte know anything about it?" Dalton asked abruptly, eyeing him. "Or anybody else?"

"No, *sir!* I didn't tell nobody!" said Luther in relief and a kind of tentative self-approval. He *knew* he had better not say anything about it, he reflected, thankfully. "I figgered 't wasn't nobody's business 'cep'n yours," he added, desirous of strengthening his credit.

"That's right!" said Dalton, almost amiably, as he drew a wad of bills from his trouser pocket, and slipped off the elastic band encircling them, and began to adjust the twenty-five in place. "I believe I did make a mistake!" he admitted magnanimously. "You just thought you'd bring it back without letting on anything to anybody, hey?"

"Yes, sir. I ain't any hand to gass 'round," said Luther, his confidence now on the way to being fully restored. "You're dead sure t' git in bad with somebody that way," he ventured further, and was pleased to observe marked appreciation of this shrewdness on the other's ordinarily immobile countenance. Mr. Dalton coughed.

"Yeah, that's right. I guess you're a pretty smart boy," he remarked gravely. Then he riffled the bills over with his thumb and finally extracted one which he held out to Luther; it was a two. "Here now, you take this—that's all right, you take it. Lots of boys in your place wouldn't have brought that money back," said the great man kindly; and snapped the elastic into position, returning the roll to his pocket. He coughed again.

It was at this precise moment that there crept into Luther's mind a suspicion that he was being somehow made game of, certainly undervalued. He had an impulse to retort with: "See here, Mister Jack Dalton, don't fool y'rself! You needn't t' think I ain't *on* to you 'n' y'r—— of a lady friend! I ain't simple if I *am* straight!" Had he in fact uttered these winged words, who knows how

it might have affected his subsequent career? But it was with an eye to that same career that he restrained himself; second thoughts are best, and in consistency he must stick to his announced policy of not getting in bad with anyone. He thanked Dalton and took the two dollars. "And—and I'd like t' drive you again some time, Mr. Dalton."

"Well now, next car I get, I'll remember and ask for you. You're one of Schulte's real good boys. I wouldn't wonder if you weren't the best boy he's got!" Dalton said; he had another attack of coughing.

## VIII

LUTHER went home in a comfortable state of self-satisfaction; the late succession of events had not been uniformly agreeable, but on the other hand it was highly instructive; and all's well that ends well. He felt that the experience would be a distinct advantage to him in future dealings with the elevated class of custom Dalton represented. These people with so much money they didn't always take the trouble to count it! One had to learn about them. Luther rather admired Dalton's royal carelessness and his royal bad temper, while congratulating himself anew on his own prudence and probity—he called it level-headedness, however. He disliked to picture what might have resulted from a visit of Dalton's to the garage, since having had this intimate glimpse of the great man's moods. The least Schulte would have done would have been to fire him, Luther thought. "And you couldn't blame him!" he added humourously and dispassionately and perhaps a little patronizingly. "Emil's gotta stand in with that swell trade so as to keep it. He'd 'a' *had* to fire me, 'f Dalton had started anything 'bout that twenty-five. It woulda been just plain good business. Well, 's over anyways. I got *that* all fixed up!" His judicial good opinion of himself somehow lifted him to Schulte's level, for the nonce; he felt as if he had done the boss a good turn.

At the corner of Poplar, lo, there was Ellie, looking so elaborately unaware of his approach that Luther—

who was by no means slow-witted, as must have been observed by this time—immediately suspected her of having been waiting and watching for him; he had no doubt, too, that she was on edge with curiosity as to his whereabouts last night. It would serve her right if he pretended not to know she was anywhere around and walked straight by without noticing her, he thought mischievously, then decided that it would be a shame to tease her. He might not have been able to carry out the first plan, anyhow, for at that instant Ellie, by some preternatural feminine cunning, caught his eye! Luther could not, for the soul of him, comprehend how she did it; she had not been looking towards him, and he had not intended to look towards her—yet here they were, all at once, face to face! He said "Hello!" rather lamely, in his confusion.

"Well, hello yourself!" said Ellie absently, surveying him without a sign of recognition; then she seemed to recover her memory with a start. "Well, *hello!* If it ain't *you!*"

"Hope you ain't forgot me? It's so long since we met."

"Is it?" said Ellie innocently. "I hadn't noticed. You been away?"

Luther glanced sidewise at her suspiciously. He said to himself that she was stalling; she had missed him last night and this morning; she had been laying for him there on the corner. Girls! He knew all about them; he knew all about Ellie Siefert anyway. "Naw, I been home right along."

"I guess we just happened not t' run inta each other like usually," Ellie suggested negligently.

Girls! You can't tell anything about them. Maybe she really had not missed him after all. Luther felt a

pique which he tried to neutralize by telling himself that he didn't care. They walked in silence until sheer uncertainty tormented him into asking humbly: "Say, you ain't mad at me, Ellie?"

Ellie ejaculated aloud at a pitch strongly contrasting with the lowered, semi-sentimental one he had chosen: "Mad at you? Well, for the goodness' sakes! Mad —what for?"

"Oh, I dunno—I thought mebbe—well, you wouldn't say nothin'——"

"'Wouldn't say nothin'?'" *Good*-night! I'll begin 'n' talk fast 's I c'n wag my tongue, if that's th' way you're goin' t' feel about it!" Ellie said with laughter. She looked at him, and suddenly Luther found their erstwhile pleasantly ticklish flirtatious footing restored; it was delightful—except when he remembered Roy; but he avoided remembering Roy.

"I didn't want you t' be mad at me," he said with a consuming glance from his black eyes; and was inordinately gratified to see hers droop before it. "I don't want you t' be mad at me, not *ever.*"

"Well, I just got through tellin' you I ain't. I don't know what put that in your head."

"You acted so cold when you seen me—just givin' me that cold hello——"

"Aw, I didn't mean it that way—cold, y' know. I just says it without thinkin' like a person does," Ellie protested, colouring through her rouge at something in his tone. "You hadn't oughta be so—so touchy."

"I ain't 'bout anybody except *you,*" sighed Luther, touching the fingers that hung down near his as they loitered side by side. It was an accident of not infrequent occurrence; he liked to see her pale and flush and snatch her hand out of the contact in a hurry that some-

how suggested half fright, half fascination, and augmented hazardously the movement of his own senses. The only drawback to this species of entertainment was that in the midst of it Roy would stalk uninvited into his mind; Luther practiced devices for getting rid of him such as assuring himself that he didn't mean anything —he was just fooling around, and Ellie, of course, didn't mean anything either—only Luther was shamefacedly certain that she never behaved in exactly this fashion with Roy: Roy wasn't that kind, he would explain to himself glibly.

"Where you been keepin' yourself, anyway, Loot?"

She *had* missed him! "Oh, I was drivin'," he said jauntily. "Why? You wanta see me 'bout anything?" He looked down at her in conscious mastery of the situation, of himself, and alas for her, of Ellie Siefert most of all!

"My *no!* I was just askin'. Can't I ast 'n' ord'nary question without your thinkin' somepin'?" she demanded in a flurry, striving to regain her vantage-ground of competent pertness.

"You know what I think. 'Bout *you,* I mean," said Luther with his devastating glance; as before, the girl could not meet it, but this time annoyance at her own weakness helped her to keep her wits.

"Yeah, I know, 'n' I'm just worried sick over it, ain't I? It's an awful pity 'bout you!" she rejoined; and having achieved this pungently satirical repartee, hurriedly deserted the subject in favor of something safer. "I didn't know you drove ever. I thought you was in th' shop."

"Oh, I drive oncet in a while when Schulte's got a customer that's kinda choose-y. Tell you, this was some drive, too!" said Luther, shaking his head, his gaze fixed

reminiscently as on forbidden depths or distances. Ellie's scared and admiring look caressed him from head to foot; for obvious reasons she did not press the inquiry, though to hear that he had been upon some adventure of gallantry would not have shocked her in the least—quite the reverse. Ellie was a rigourously good girl; but she had the ingrained regard of her sex for a rake. They lingered so on the road that Roy, in spite of having to cover double the distance, reached home a quarter of an hour ahead of them; but that often happened.

In the course of the next day or two, Mr. Schulte returned from Dayton, bringing his sheaves with him, so to call several resplendent bargains in cars so little used as to be practically new; and doubtless Emil had met opponents worthy of him, and to quote from the same high source, had been saying among the trumpets, Ha, ha! It put him into so complacently triumphant a humour that he even condoned finding the establishment at loose ends here and there, as he made his rounds. This inability to get along even for only two days without the guidance of the master-mind might be construed flatteringly, on the whole. Coming to Luther, he saluted him in jocose appraisal.

"Well, well, *well!* Don't look quite so nifty as the last time we seen each other, do you, Loot? Say, I guess I gotta get you fixed up to stay. I never give a hang for these temporary-permanent arrangements," he said. Luther received the intimation with a sober and non-committal grin, though inwardly jubilant. The other drew him aside in a confidential style that preened his sense of importance anew.

"Say, Luther, how'd you make out the other night, huh?"

"Oh, I guess ev'thing was all right," said Luther with artificial coolness. For all his conceit, the young fellow knew himself to be no match for Schulte; even in this moment of relaxation the boss was still the boss, his quick eyes, his quick brain still formidable.

"They went to the Turkeytrot, didn't they? When'd you get back?"

Luther told him, and he arched his brows, then swore amiably, then chuckled in frankly libidinous amusement. "Well, Jack's no piker! And he's got the stuff. It takes considerable for them little jaunts," he commented; and laughed again, and asked secretively what did she look like? "That Mrs. Schaeffer—it was her, y'know—of course I guessed that right off, the minute he mentioned a lady. I don't happen ever to have seen her. She's some looker, though, I expect, hey?"

"Aw, I didn't notice—at least, not much," said Luther, embarrassed. "I didn't wanta butt in, like you said."

"Sure! Only it wouldn't have hurt to take a pike at her. Pshaw, women don't mind *that,*" said his superior, in genially contemptuous regard for the sex. "They don't care who they're making a hit with, s'long's they're making it. And they always *know,* you bet! You can salt that down to remember for the next time —if there *is* a next time," Emil interpolated more guardedly. "Did Dalton act like he was satisfied?"

"Yeah—far's I know," said Luther a little sulkily, resenting the older man's patronizing attitude. *"She* was, anyhow." No sooner were the last words out than he regretted them; he had not meant to report the lady's impressions to Schulte or to anybody. Too late he realized that temper and vanity had got the better of him; for at once the other pricked his ears.

"Hey? *She* was? What d'you mean, *she* was?"

"Aw, it wasn't nothin'—she—she was just talkin' ——" But Schulte's eye fairly bored into him; red-faced and reluctant and desperately forcing a laugh, Luther blurted out Mrs. Shaeffer's opinion in full, to Schulte's intense enjoyment, as he had wretchedly foreseen. Yet the moment was not so bad after all, for he detected a note in the other's mirth that relieved him at the same time that it remotely perplexed; his employer was clearly not laughing so much at him as at some aspect of the incident infinitely more ludicrous than appeared on the surface. He prodded Luther in the ribs, his whole face creased with lewd relish.

" 'Zippy,' huh? You wanta watch out, Luther! First thing you know, when Shaeffer gets to naming the co-respondents, he'll pick *you!* 'Zippy'! You better get heeled with an alibi. Let Dalton stand it, he's better fixed!" And with these words, for some incomprehensible reason, a glaring illumination descended upon Luther; Emil, without knowing a single feature of the transaction, had turned the lime-light upon Dalton and that twenty-five!

Habit kept the young fellow from betraying himself; he went off with his enlightenment slowly making way for indignation. Look at it how you choose, there is a difference between being hired to drive an automobile, and being hired to hold your tongue; the bargain, will-ye, nill-ye, has an unhandsome air; it automatically classes both the buyer and the bought, peculiarly to the disadvantage of the latter. You cannot sell out and be your own man still. Luther had an instant of clean anger; Dalton did not have to bribe him; he was no tattle-tale; he would never have dreamed of telling on Dalton or

any other man in like circumstances. He said to himself savagely that he had a good mind to go and throw the money in Dalton's face; but prudence pointed out that the time for that spirited performance was past and irretrievable. All very fine to throw twenty-five dollars, but somehow there did not seem to be much heroism about throwing two, everything else considered. That, at any rate, was not the way to get even with Dalton; in fact, there was no way, Luther ruefully perceived. If it ever happened again, if he ever had another chance —but instinct taught him that it never would happen again, and that Dalton never would give him another chance. Luther ground his teeth, picturing the other man's amusement—at his expense. Two dollars! He began to call himself a fool. He might as well have taken the twenty-five, even had he known it for a bribe —since he had no intention of telling, anyhow, he added hastily. For that matter, it made no difference what a man like Dalton thought of him; more than likely, anybody that had the price could bribe Jack Dalton. He had expected, he had taken it for granted that he would have to give Luther something; and why shouldn't he? Why shouldn't Luther have taken it? No business of his for what reason Dalton wanted to make him a present of twenty-five dollars; as it was, he had two! Luther swore venomously that it should never happen a second time; he would *know*.

In his naïve shrewdness, he had no fear that Dalton for his part would capitalize the occurrence as an anecdote to raise a laugh; it definitely belonged among the private experiences that, however diverting, cannot be told or must be told with so many reservations as to impair their piquancy. And in fact the ex-councilman breathed no word of it, when upon the occasion of his

settling with Schulte, the latter brought up Luther's name.

"Yeah, he done all right. Good driver!" said Mr. Dalton, with his light eyes as unreadable as always, though he did add: "New at it, I guess, ain't he?"

"New is right! I got him driving regular now, but that was his first time. I wouldn't have sent him 'f I'd had anybody better, but I was kinda stuck, and couldn't help myself. You don't know what kinda job I'm up against here, Jack," the garage chieftain declared with warmth. "Take, f'r instance, that Nichols boy when he first come in here—or take any of 'em. You ain't any idea what it's like. They—why, they ain't hardly civilized!"

"Oh, well, everybody's got to learn," said Dalton leniently. "Nichols'll learn—little slow, maybe." But, as has been shown, Luther was progressing very creditably.

# IX

When what romantically minded persons referred to as the call to arms was issued by this government in the spring of 1917, it met with no very eager or enthusiastic response among Amelia Street and Deercreek Pike and Western Avenue circles. It was not courage that the young men lacked, but interest. Luther and Roy and the rest would have stood up to the fighting, and taken their turn at the miseries of the trenches with a good spirit, patiently and resolutely, as indeed was amply demonstrated later; if they held back at the beginning it was not because the adventure frightened them, but that they did not realize they had part or lot in it, that it was in very truth their adventure. The entry of the United States into the war assumed for them the remote and impersonal aspect of all government activities. A huge, vague entity that made laws, collected taxes, and carried on other business too complicated and monumental to be by any effort of imagination, considered their business, had now embarked on another of its enterprises independent of them as usual; and as usual what it did was no concern of theirs! On the North Hill there was not a young man left; they volunteered in droves from that expensive and select locality as from every similar locality all over the country. The clubs and ball-rooms were depopulated; society put on khaki or its oldest clothes, drilled, nursed, begged, gave, undertook and put through a thousand tasks it would normally have looked upon as little short of insane; but Luther Nichols kept on driv-

ing for Schulte. Save for a scattering few, all his friends and associates kept on like him at their several jobs, as unmoved by wars and rumors of wars as he. They had their own private problem to meet, and were essentially incurious about public ones.

Conscription, however, put a new face on matters; no one knew or cared any more about the rights and wrongs of the struggle than he did before, but a philosophic willingness to take the government's word about it, and fall in with the government's plans, became manifest. Evasion was the last idea that came into the boys' heads; they felt the sense of fellowship imparted by identity of circumstance and age and experience and upbringing; and shrank, every one, from the notion of being singled out and set apart from the others, for whatever reason. They found their names in the lists and went off and reported at the designated stations in much the same frame of mind as if they had been answering an advertisement for male help; and emerged from the physical examination in a glow of boastful satisfaction if they had passed it successfully, with words of sincere commiseration for those who had not. "Jim couldn't make it 'count of his eyes—he's pretty sore over it."—"I felt real sorry for the poor guy that went in just ahead of me. He had something with one leg and the doc wouldn't pass him."—"Say, what d'you know about me being ninety-five percent *right,* huh? Measurements and weight and the whole business. Ninety-five percent! Gee! I never even suspected it. Of course I knew I was the average, but ninety-five percent! That's way over, you know, way up. Gee!" One heard them comparing notes, bandying intimate personal information on all sides: their elders heard and laughed and sighed.

Roy was caught in the first draft, a piece of luck

which he accepted with the same fatalistic good-humour as all the rest, though even less capable of understanding why there should be any draft, or any war for that matter. To Roy's way of thinking the strangest, most unaccountable spectacle on earth was that of one man deliberately making trouble for another man: it was a thing against reason and common-sense: peace and quiet were obviously so much the better course that there was no arguing it. When jocularly asked if he was all set to go fight the Germans, he would answer with a worried look that he guessed he would have to do what the other boys did—he did not know any mean Germans—he would rather fight a mean one.

"Well, they're mostly mean—sinking ships and cutting off babies' hands, and acting like they wanted the earth. I expect they're all pretty much alike when it comes to meanness. That lets you out. You don't have to do no picking."

"Loot's folks is German from way back, most of 'em, 'n' they never done nothin' like that," said Roy. "I don't b'lieve that about their cuttin' off childerns' hands. There ain't anybody goin' t' take 'n' do a thing like that. If they did, they was crazy, that's all. I wouldn't want t' shoot no crazy man neither."

"Well, them Germans in th' old country, I guess they're diff'rent to what they are here."

"Maybe," Roy assented dubiously. His conception of the old country was cloudy in the extreme: Europe, France and Germany figured therein as large, indefinite, parti-coloured shapes bearing no recognizable relation to actual land and water, in accordance with his blurred recollection of the appearance they had presented on maps hanging up on the schoolroom wall. He found it impossible to visualize them as places full of houses and

hills and people like Ohio, like Kentucky yonder across the river. The moving-pictures with their files of troops on parade, crowds in unfamiliar dress, turreted castles and bridges, and the narrow, busy streets of ancient cities neither enlightened nor convinced him; they could not be associated with the pink and green blotches netted with minute lines and lettering of his first acquaintance. To be sure, nobody he knew was much clearer on the subject than himself. For a time the immigrant grandfathers and grandmothers in the community, heretofore mimicked and laughed at for the oddities of their ways and broken speech, enjoyed a novel popularity flavored with unprecedented respect and attention. They were eternally being enjoined to say it in French, say it in German, say it in dago! The audience wanted to hear what those tongues "sounded like," and would painstakingly echo them, stumbling amongst the outlandish inflections, without a thought of teasing nowadays; it was their elders' turn to parody and poke fun. Roy made no attempt at these linguistic studies, though it was pointed out to him that it would be both lonesome and highly inconvenient not to know a few of the alien words, enough at least to "get around," and bargain without risk of being cheated.

"You don't wanta go 'round making signs like the deaf-and-dumbs do," Ellie urged. "It would give anybody th' creeps to see you, let alone they likely wouldn't understand anyhow."

"Most of th' boys can't talk nothin' but United States —I won't be th' on'y one; 'n' I won't miss talkin' like some do, becuz I ain't ever been much on th' talk, you know," said Roy, undisturbed. He pondered, knitting his brows after his fashion in the effort of thought. "I don't figger on being lonesome much, either—not any

more than I alluz am, that is. 'F I feel a spell of it comin' on, I'll just set 'n' think about you back home here, 'n' Loot, 'n' Mr. Graddy out t' th' stockyards, 'n' everybody. That'll be kinda comp'ny for me."

"I like the way you stick your old Graddy man in along with *me!*" declared Ellie, pretending indignation; it amused her to see his sober, trustful face cloud over. "Think as much of your old boss as you do of me! I love *that,* Roy McArdle!" She did not name Luther, who equally had a place on Roy's brief honor-roll: in fact, she avoided speaking of him at all when alone with Roy, unwillingly conscious with vexation, with a species of fright that she could not do so easily and naturally, under Roy's direct, unquestioning eyes. Often at such moments, she would surprise her lover with sudden demonstrations of affection, cuddling up to him, giving his hand a little squeeze, tousling his hair. He was not ready enough to benefit much by these advances which invariably startled and confused the honest fellow not a little. Now he set himself conscientiously to clearing up Mr. Graddy's status.

"I don't even him up t' you, Ellie. It's this way: a man thinks a lot of some other man sometimes, but it ain't th' same like he thinks of his girl. You'd think a lot of Mr. Graddy too, if you knew him. He's goin' t' leave me have my job again when I come back, 'n' he talked real kind, 'n' says for me not t' worry, 'n' he guessed I'd make out first-rate soldierin' becuz I'd alluz worked faithful for *him,* so I says, 'Mr. Graddy,' I says, 'I ain't ever done a thing but what I was paid t' do.' I says. ''N' you alluz treated me good, 'n' I wanta ack right.' I says, 'n'——"

"*Good*-night! I was just in fun!" ejaculated Ellie impatiently. "I'll give in Mr. Graddy's the greatest

ever, but I don't wanta to set all night an' hear how him an' you threw bouquets at each other. Enough's plenty!" And Roy was obediently silent, not in the least resentful of her attitude. No one ever paid great attention to his simple affairs, or cared to listen to him, so that he did not expect interest even from his sweetheart. Luther Nichols might have chattered away to her about himself for hours at a stretch and Ellie would not have missed a word, as she knew; she explained to herself lamely that he was different—it was a different thing altogether. The thought of him spurred her to add: "Maybe it'll be all over before you get inta it, anyhow, Roy. I seen a piece in the paper the other day where it said the Germans was scared stiff on account of us going in, and they was ready to talk peace right now. So maybe you won't have to go after all, and we're just worrying about nothing."

"I ain't worrying," said Roy, prosaically. "'Tain't as if I had any folks. Even if we was married I'd know you could take care of yourself, and as long as Loot was here he'd look out f'r you, too. We're as good as brothers. He wouldn't let nothin' happen to you, while I was away."

Ellie looked at him with the impossible mingling of relief and piqued vanity a woman experiences at being entirely trusted. "Loot'll likely get taken too, if it lasts long enough, and anyway——" she paused, then went on, studiously fingering a button on his coat: "What would you do, Roy, 'f I went and took up with some other fella while you was gone?"

"Aw, you wouldn't, you just wanta tease. But I wouldn't think a thing like that 'bout you, Ellie," Roy assured her seriously. "I know you wouldn't no more 'n I'd go with some other girl."

It was only a day or so later that orders were posted calling upon McAdams, James; McAllister, Stephen; McArdle, Roy, and numerous other Mcs and Ms, companioned by the rest of the alphabet, to report for duty at Camp Callahan; and within the week, the Ohio quota of recruits was speeding thither. All at once it began to look as if they stood a very good chance of getting into it. spite of newspaper rumors; for the war was keeping on, the Germans were keeping on, exactly as if they had not yet heard about the draft, or having heard didn't care! Luther and Ellie went down to the station to see Roy off; and there was a crowd with numbers of women and babies, everybody excited and more or less hysterical. Ellie remarked disdainfully on the crying and "carrying-on"; she had her reserves, and would not have allowed herself to "carry-on" over Roy, even if she had been disposed that way. But the truth was none of the young people were much stirred sentimentally; they were too interested in what was going on today for doleful apprehensions as to what might be going on tomorrow. Besides, no gathering could have looked less warlike; the boys in their everyday clothes swarming all over the trains, fighting, hallooing, skylarking, brought to mind only the mobs at the races or the Sunday afternoon ball-game, or on the cheap excursions to Mammoth Cave and High Bridge. It was inconceivable that they should be entering on the first lap of the awful and abhorrent errand from which they might never return. Even the detail of regulars from Fort William who were to shepherd this rough flock on the journey lent no air of military preparation to the scene. One of them, seeking to "round up his bunch"—as he explained—got hold of Luther and was with difficulty persuaded of his mistake. He was a zealous soul. "How come, anyhow?" he inquired suspiciously: "You

*oughta* to be in. Married? Well, all I gotta say is, you ain't any business to be. Married, huh!" His glance passed darkly to Ellie.

"Married nothin'!" retorted Luther, half angry, half amused. "She ain't my girl even! She's his—that big fella's with the grip. They didn't get me this time, that's all. I had that there questionnaire paper, though, like everybody else. They got my number all right."

"Oh! Huh! See you later, then!" The sergeant dropped him, and shouldered off after legitimate prey; Luther rejoined the others, laughing at Roy's countenance of perplexity and alarm; and perhaps evading Ellie's eyes—or it might be that she evaded his. She began to be very voluble and indignant.

"Well, if *that's* an off'cer, deliver *me!* Th' big stiff! He's got a lotta sense, I don't think! What was the matter with him, anyway?"

"Oh, he just thought he'd nipped a draft-dodger—he's a pretty good old scout at that," Luther said leniently. "Say, look there, Roy! I believe there's one of 'em after *you.*"

In fact, the uniforms were hurrying hither and yon, combing out the crowd; there was hustling, and getting in line; the civilians were being made to fall back. "I guess this is where we say good-bye, Roy," said Ellie. "Go *on,* you don't wanta kiss me before the whole push! Well——!" she submitted, giggling a little affectedly.

"You kinda take care of her, Loot, will ya?" Roy said. "You kinda—I mean—you know——?"

"Sure!"

They shook hands. Roy was presently sorted out; there were sporadic outbursts of cheering, a shouting exchange of facetiae; a band struck up "Over There"; the train got in motion; and Luther and Ellie walked

away for once silent, even grave, not thinking of each other. Neither of them somehow felt in a flirtatious humor, and Ellie took time from the noon-hour to stop in at the Fashion Shoppe and buy a hank of grey yarn with which she started a pair of socks for Roy that very evening.

The papers announced the arrival of the troops at camp where the buildings to house them were not yet begun; and in due course letters came back addressed alternately to Mis. Ellie Siefert, Ameeliar Str. and to Mister L. Nichols Esk.—letters on ruled paper much thumbed and creased. "We slepe in tens they call pupp tens it ant badd but wen it ranes o boy. sum of the boys got good cooks but we got a bum cook they call it mess wich if you ast me mess is rite. so no more at pressen am well and hope you are the same so no more from yors truly and take good care of yorself with my love i am yors truly R. McArdle" Roy wrote in his half-formed hand, the loose, ungainly letters straggling across the page among smears and blobs of ink. "Dere Ellie ime glad i got yor picher i look at yor picher lots, mister Grady sen me sum candy it was nice candy what did i tell you hes all rite." The others replied in a good deal the same style; to tell the sadly unromantic truth, the composition and execution of these missives involved so much labour for all hands that it was not a very brisk correspondence. After all, as Ellie practically pointed out, the newspapers kept everybody posted about the army, and if anything important should happen here at home somebody would let Roy know at once; there was no real need of writing so often when things were going on just as usual, and they had nothing special to tell each other. Anyhow, they might just as well get used to doing without letters for when the government got this censorship business, or whatever

they called it, good and going, by what *she* understood, you couldn't hardly get a letter through at all! Probably Roy held the same opinion, though for his part he continued to write weekly, having begun that practice, and being of a methodical habit.

The weeks wheeled around; there were more and greater changes. The dwindling numbers of young men about the shops and offices and the corresponding increase of uniforms on the streets began to be noticeable. Luther was the only male lodger Mrs. Siefert had left except his neighbor the anarchist; and one day amid considerable excitement two officers from police headquarters and a plain-clothes man, said to be an agent of the Department of Justice, descended on Nine-Sixty-One Amelia and haled Mr. Olskovich off none knew whither or why. It was a great occasion for the street, all the women running out, all the children gleefully scurrying and shrieking, the windows crammed with heads, Mrs. Siefert squawking distractedly, the reporters congregating with unimaginable promptness. Ellie and Luther heard about it when they got home, sitting at supper in the kitchen; since Roy's departure, the other young man had taken his place, by tacit consent, in the Siefert family circle. They unanimously voted Olskovich a spy and a good riddance.

"Not but what he always paid," Mrs. Siefert said. "I didn't suspect nothin'. 'T wasn't none of my business where his money come from. I tol' the p'leeceman *that* right out."

"What'd he say?"

"Nothin'. It was them newspaper reporters done the most of the talkin' anyhow. They gotta pitcher of the house, just like a murder had been here. I wisht you'd 'a' been home, Ellie. The whole thing got me so rattled."

"I wish *I'd* been here. *I'd* 'a' told 'em where they got off," said Luther arrogantly. Both of the women gazed at him with an admiring confidence of which he was quite aware. The braggart style became him; it consorted well with his daring presence, the hint about him of a graceful young pirate, and would have imposed conviction on much more acute and sophisticated judges. Ellie caught herself as their eyes met and sought cover in trepidation; the girl went in constant apprehension of betraying some secret she tried to keep even from herself. She spoke with anxious false lightness.

"You're the on'y man round here now, Loot. How's it feel?"

"Suits me all right. I dont want no bunch of fellas hangin' round where you are."

Ellie flinched in guilty pleasure; to your tents, oh, Israel! But she sat helplessly tongued-tied, she who was ordinarily so ready.

"Mebbe you won't be here much longer either, Loot," her mother said. "Might get your notice any day, you know. Well, this ain't washin' the dishes——" she sighed, dragging her lank, drab figure up out of the chair.

"That's right, Ma, be a crape-hanger, do!" Ellie retorted upon her sharply—more sharply than she herself realized. "He ain't gone yet, anyhow."

"I wasn't sayin' he'd *have* to," expostulated Mrs. Siefert in mild amazement. "I just says, *mebbe*."

"Well, it'd be a whole lot cheerfuller if you was to say *mebbe* the war'd be over, while you're *mebbe*-ing. I do hate people to go round long-faced always looking for the worst they can think of to happen every minute," Ellie explained, conscious of Luther's eye. "It's bad enough as it is, what's the use borrowin' trouble?"

"Why, Ellie, you ack all nervous and wrought up!"

her mother said. She addressed Luther deprecatingly. "They've piled a lotta extra work onto her down to Stein's. That's what's the matter, y' know."

Luther knew; he knew accurately what was the matter with Ellie Siefert, his friend Roy's girl. It gave him a thrill of gratified vanity, even while his conscience stirred and threatened. But—he would argue to himself—how could he help it? How could any fellow help it if a girl got dead stuck on him?

# X

Mrs. Siefert was at least half right as to the taut condition of her daughter's nerves and the cause of it; Ellie was overworked. The times were not propitious for wholesale-millinery enterprises, and Messrs. Stein & Merkel had been taking in sail. Their force of help was cut down to the minimum where it had not already been depleted by departures to other and better paid jobs, of which there were now dozens open in industries hitherto unheard-of or supposed impracticable for women. The willing and capable workers left found themselves carrying a double load. To be sure it was at nearly a double wage, but somehow with the commonest expenses of living going higher day by day, no one seemed to have any more money than before. Ellie's ambitions were on the way to fulfilment and by one of those small ironical adjustments which the fates delight to contrive for us, she got no satisfaction out of it; she had no time. As forewoman, she bent all her energies to "bringing up her department" in her own oft-repeated phrase, besides attending to a score of other duties taken upon herself voluntarily or entrusted to her by the management, or shirked by those who had them in charge. The girl—she was, in fact, past twenty-seven, breathe it not in Gath!—had a good business head, a sense of responsibility, a conscience which gave her some uneasy quarters of an hour, as has been hinted. She worked hard, and came home late and weary to be tantalized by Luther's presence, or harried by jealous uncertainty as to his whereabouts and what he

was doing, if absent. All the while she clung desperately to the figment of worry over Roy; it accounted conveniently for her moods. At times even, she took comfort in the thought of him, he was so securely hers! He bolstered up her pride; there was one man, at any rate, who wanted her and nobody but her, and had as lief all the world knew it. The trouble about Luther Nichols was his apparent tolerance for matters as they stood; for all the inflammatory suggestion of his manner, he was cool; Ellie had a miserable suspicion—only too well-founded, alas!—that he believed himself sure of her.

Nowadays, although they still started out to their work together, they rarely met coming home; the hours of both were too irregular. Ellie stayed overtime night after night, and Luther was driving anywhere and everywhere early and late. There were no social diversions that winter; hardly in a month would Schulte be called upon for a car to the theatre or to any entertainment at a private house, but it seemed to Luther, on the other hand, as if his single travel must be wearing out the streets leading to the different railway stations; he swore he could go to every Red Cross and "Y" committee-room in the city blindfolded; he had transported enough privates to make up an army in themselves, enough "gobs" to man the navy, enough officers of all ranks to lead them both. The Daltons and Mrs. Schaeffers and all their like had disappeared; there were not so many tips as formerly; but if these war-time patrons were frugal and temperate they were also heartily democratic. They shared the front seat, talked freely except about military movements, and asked Luther questions about himself and why he was not "in" which sometimes annoyed him. He began vacillatingly to consider going "in"; you travelled, saw the world, Uncle Sam footed all the bills, and paid you

into the bargain. Of course, there was the poison-gas, and there were the trenches and the chance of a bullet through your head. Might go in the navy, though; only the risk of being submarined there. If you volunteered instead of waiting for the draft-officers' summons, you could take your choice of service in any branch. Luther trifled with the idea, or rather the idea insistently obtruded itself upon him; it would not down.

The news came of the sinking of the *Tuscania;* and simultaneously Luther and Ellie became uncomfortably conscious that they had not had word from Roy for a long while. His division had been moved repeatedly from camp to camp, entailing it would seem, a great deal of delay and confusion in the mailing service, so that his letters had not come regularly of late; and as to their own, they discovered separately and secretly with remorse that they could not remember when they had last written. And now, the *Tuscania!* What if——? Ellie sat down and wrote to Roy's last address in a panic; but before the letter could have got well started on its way, there came one from him, travel-worn, checkered with ominous black cancellations that needed no explanation. Everybody had seen letters from the front, or fac-similes of them by this time.

"Oh, Loot, Roy's over there! Roy's got over there!"

They both regarded the letter not without awe, turning it about gingerly, startled, in a sense awakened. It was true. The war, so distant, so unbelievable in spite of drafts and camps and Liberty Loans and four-minute-men and all the rest, was true; Roy was in it. For one brief instant, they lost sight of themselves in the glare of tremendous facts.

"Well, he wasn't on that boat that went down, then!" Luther said in sincere relief. "He musta got over there

a'ready." He examined the letter again, even his sluggish imagination spurred to picture where and when it had been written. "Wonder how Roy takes to them cooties, huh? Maybe it ain't so—about 'em, I mean. They tell so many stories. Less hear what he says."

Ellie complied forthwith, nowise embarrassed; what Roy wrote his sweetheart scarcely came under the head of love-letters and might have been read by anybody. This, as it turned out, was intended for both of them; it began "dere frends," and went on to state that he did not have time to write to each one, he was "bizy." He would put in some picture-cards so that they could see what it looked like, only they wouldn't leave you buy no picture-cards with the name of the place on, nor nothing about it. The one with the picture of the Sal. Army girl with the "donots" was all right and just like them. He would tell the world they were all right. He guessed there was not much more they would leave him write, so no more from theirs truly with love: "p. s. i ben fitin sum. R.Mc." the letter finished. The post-cards were indeed as non-committal regarding location or military details as pictures could well be: *French Peasant with plough* was one subject, *Village Church, Sheep pasturing in the Bois de Boulogne,* and so on. The young man and woman looked at them with a certain respect; and Ellie set them up in a row on the mantelpiece and for a while impressively drew the attention of visitors to them, savoring her position of a girl with a fellow "over there."

Not long after this, Luther's awaited notification arrived, definitely and grimly putting an end to his hoverings; for that very reason, perhaps, he found it not wholly unwelcome. It released him from responsibility, without at all undermining his self-respect—quite the contrary. For although to some minds there might be noth-

ing especially commendable about being a conscript as compared with being a volunteer, the results were the same. Luther found himself elevated to a gratifying importance in his small sphere; everybody was interested, appreciative, serious, beginning, of all men in the world, with Emil Schulte, to whom, of course, he went first with the news.

"Well, I guess I gotta go!" he said, studiously casual, twirling the official document between his fingers. "Guess they can't make out no longer without me."

"Uh? Hey?" said Emil, not immediately understanding; then he looked from the paper to Luther's smile, and the expression of his own face changed; he took his heels down from the desk. "Less see!"

Luther obediently laid it before him, but a mere glance was enough. "Yeh, I expect you gotta go," the other admitted. "Well——"

There intervened an awkward moment of silence, neither man knowing quite what he wanted to say, perhaps thinking rather confusedly. After having lived in a more or less close association for the last three years, each discovered a feeling for the other that, now suddenly revealed, surprised and abashed him.

"Well, you gotta go," Schulte said again at length. "Of course I'd a heap rather you didn't. I was kinda in hopes they wouldn't need all you boys—but it's all right," he interpolated hastily. Emil was a staunch supporter of the government and the Allied cause. "We gotta lick 'em. Well——!" He paused. "Folks know?"

"Not yet they don't. I was thinkin' 'f you'd give me off t' go out there 'n' tell 'em——?"

"Sure!"

"'Tain't nothin' but what they was expectin', I guess. They's lots of Deercreek boys in a'ready,' said Luther,

and something moved him to add: "I was figgerin' on goin' in anyhow, if this hadn't of come."

"Uh-huh? Well, you don't need to now, long's they've saved you the trouble," said his employer, forcing the jocular note a little; there was something of envy, something of pride, something of melancholy in the look he turned on the young man. He stood up and held out his hand. "Well, I'm glad you feel right about it, Luther. We gotta lick 'em. I'm too old to be any great account; all of us men of my age, we know we gotta leave it to you young ones, and we like to see you feel right about it," he said with grave approval. "I hope you'll have luck. And don't let your job worry you. Any serviceman that comes round here's going to get a square deal."

Luther thanked him; they shook hands; the boss gave him a cigar; and he went back to change his clothes for the last time.

Out on the Pike—where, let it be stated with regret, Luther had not been visiting for a year or more—the news was received with more resentment. "They come after us an' come after us for all th' money we got, an' then th' boys they should go yet! Who's to work th' farms *they* don't care! Food it will win th' war, so th' potatoes an' chickens they grow theirselves, don't they?" said Mrs. Alvin in ferocious sarcasm. The proposition to employ a brigade of young women in overalls did not commend itself to her. Old Hilda, like every other woman in the settlement, had been doing all kinds of rough outdoor labor all her life so that there was nothing novel about the suggestion except the overalls, and these last appeared to her as a piece of unnecessary and spectacular flourish. She had always managed well enough in her own native skirts. Overalls, indeed! And furthermore, on the score of practicability, what did city

girls know about the country? You would have to be after them every minute, and they would be more trouble than they were worth. "I guess we get along without no girls in pants or whatever!" she declared roundly. In fact, there were enough of them to work the place profitably; barring touches of rheumatism, she and Pop had good use of themselves still; Hermann kept in fair health. Pretty soon little Hermann he would be standing on market, huh?

"He was goin' t' run away an' join th' army, him an' another boy. What d'you know about that?"

"Well, I would 'a' gone in myself—I was goin' to, on'y they got me anyhow, so it don't make no differ," Luther said. The family surveyed him, divided between admiration and impatience.

"Well, I'm thankful you had 'nough sense t' stay out this long, anyway!" Lizzie snapped, distress and anxiety assuming the guise of ill-temper, as was usual with her. She hung around Luther with little fretful attention all the afternoon; and his mother cooked a dish of her famous spätzlas, and stuffed his pockets with crullers at parting.

Breaking the news to Ellie was, as Luther acknowledged to himself, "something else again"; mingled with a complacent anticipation of the devastating effect it would have on her was a certain fear. Matters had by now progressed to a point beyond which he vehemently desired not to look; like many another flirtatious young gentleman, it caressed him infinitely to know of his success and in the society of the conquered fair he could get up a very lively warmth of feeling on his own side; but apart from her in sober moments he had an uneasy sensation of skating on extremely thin ice, aggravated by the realization that should he break through, there

was no foretelling what might happen. Harmless while they both played the game with understanding and adroitness, it now held out highly disquieting possibilities. He blamed Ellie. She was crazy about him; what could a fellow do when a girl was crazy about him? It put him in an awful box—though he sure liked Ellie a whole lot, he would sigh to himself sentimentally. He approached her with determined flippancy.

"Wouldn't wonder if Roy 'n' me would be pallin' round t'gether same's old times, directly. Depends on how soon they get me over there."

She understood at once with the tragic readiness of a woman to grasp evil tidings. *"Luther!* You—you ain't gotta——? They ain't called you?"

"Why, yes—but *say! Don't!* Look here, Ellie—*don't!"* stammered Luther, helplessly. He saw her face tremble; he saw the tears rising; worst of all he saw, against his will, the depths of a pitiful passion that shamed and appalled him. *"Don't!* It ain't anything—I mean it's just th' same like all th' other fellas. I ain't th' on'y one——"

"I c-can't help it!" sobbed Ellie in open abandon. "I don't know what I'll *do!* I can't stand it—if you g-go! I can't *stand* it——!" Her voice rose wildly. "I j-just can't stand it, I—I——"

Luther opened his arms to her.

The simplest and most obvious rudiments of melodramatic construction require that all these touching passages should lead up to the hero's instant departure to death and glory—or to glory at any rate—amongst the hideous scenes of the Old World. But alas for romance, what actually did follow was in the nature of an anticlimax. The only body of water Luther had to cross at this time was the Ohio River, when he was sent with

a contingent of fellow rookies over to Fort William; and instead of splendidly plunging into the thick of the fray at once, he was fated to spend month after month in practice marches, setting-up exercises, military drill, and eke such unwarlike occupations as swabbing down floors and lending a hand around the company kitchen. Let us be frank and add that his routine was broken into once or twice by a sojourn in the brigg doing penance for some minor infraction of discipline. What would you have? Young men will be young men; and on the whole Luther made a good soldier. He was of an amiable temper, willing, fairly quick to understand; and he took to the ornament, and the dictated observances of army life with a certain simple relish. He could not have put his feeling into words, indeed he would have sharply resented being charged with it, nevertheless he felt that all this punctilio about dress and habits and conduct operated magically to convert the veriest clodhopper into something resembling a gentleman, outwardly at least; as to inwardly, Luther did not trouble his head with fine-drawn distinctions. Plenty of money and good clothes were the only essential attributes of a gentleman in his view; and he recognized that the uniform with its attendant circumstance somehow created an illusion kindred to and as becoming as that produced by any amount of wealth and wardrobe. He liked to be clean, smart, point-devise in accoutrement, mannerly; and, in fact, his excellence in all these particulars won him some notice and approval not only from his official superiors, but—it is much to be feared on Ellie's account—from numbers of lady visitors to the camp.

Almost any boy in the command could drive an automobile after a fashion, and was frequently called upon for that duty; but as soon as it transpired that Luther

had been a professional chauffeur in civilian life, there was a more active demand for him, especially among the officers, than for the rest. Possibly the young fellow's tidy swagger had something to do with this popularity—that "look" of the Nichols boys, which erstwhile had drawn attention even on bucolic Deercreek; he could tool a battered and overworked army machine with as much of an air as if it were a Rolls-Royce! Luther was nothing loath; he was brought into close range of almost all the military or political or social celebrities, and many a man envied him his car-loads of girls, nurses, "Y" workers, volunteer aids in all departments, or simply sisters, wives and daughters of the Service. They were not all young and pretty, by any means, but they were beings in skirts and as such exerted the age-old attraction.

"I get so sick and tired of our eternal, omnipresent beards and breeches, it seems sometimes as if any, *any* piece of calico, no matter what she looks like, is a refreshing sight!" Luther overheard one of his officers swearing to another. The latter was a regular-army man, and he laughed.

"How would you like to be off at some God-forsaken post in Alaska or the Philippines where the officers can't take their families, and you don't see a woman for months together, unless it's some native squaw all wobbed up in a dirty blanket? Now *here*——!" He waved a gesture towards the opposite side of the river. "*Here* you're in civilization. Step across the bridges pretty nearly any time you want to—girl—restaurant—luncheon—matinee tea-dance—there you are! Everybody with the glad hand out—if you don't see what you want, ask for it! Man, you don't know what luck you're in! It's civilization," he repeated.

"Is it? I thought civilization, such as it was, had rather gone by the board lately."

"We ought all of us to be over in Flanders this minute," said the third man in the car, restlessly. "We're ready enough. All this shilly-shally and red tape! We'll be too late, if we don't look out."

"You've been playing in hard luck from the start, Joe," the first said. He was the one they called Meigs, a slender man with thick, iron-gray hair, a fact which caused Luther to put him down for seventy years at the least, notwithstanding something of youthful vivacity in his voice and movements; he had been "over there" already, acting as interpreter, liaison officer or in some such capacity, had only recently returned, and was now going about the country upon errands someway connected with the French High Commission, it was understood. Luther had heard him chittering incomprehensible gibberish with one of the visiting notables during an entire afternoon of driving. "Kinda foreign-looking guy with his whiskers cut real close to his face an' pointed. He had on a blue uniform, the foreign one, I mean. At that he didn't look much foreigner than this here Captain Meigs," the young man reported.

"Ordway volunteered at the go-off," the captain now went on to explain to the officer of regulars. "Went up to Camp Harrison and got his commission, and they assigned him to Fort William almost within sight of his home—and here he's been ever since!"

The other ejaculated appreciatively; they both regarded Lieutenant Ordway with a sympathy under which he squirmed a little, his round pink face acquiring a deeper pink still. He was short and stout—too stout; his dumpy legs encased in khaki and puttees recalled the files of heavy-set stone balustrades one may see among

the architectural embellishments of an Italian garden; his paw-like hands were so cushioned with flesh across the backs it gave them an inefficient look. Impossible to vision that soft, pudgy grasp on the hilt of a weapon, or at an enemy throat! The malign fates had finished him off with a round head, snub features, and slightly prominent blue eyes, near-sighted to judge by the owlish spectacles he had to wear. The army costume which dignifies almost any figure was fairly defeated by his fat-boy-in-buttons grotesqueness. "Him an' that there slim Meigs fella alongside look like Mutt 'n' Jeff!" Luther thought, controlling his grin.

Ordway spoke deprecatingly. "I don't say I'm pining to live in a mud-hole with the chance of being gassed or blown to bits," said he. "I only feel the way everybody else does—*you know?* Like shouting out: 'Oh, for the Lord's sake, let's go and get this job done and over with, so we can all go back home and begin where we left off, and have everything safe and quiet and decent the same as before!'"

Colonel Barry shouted with laughter, supposing in all honesty that the speaker meant to be taken humorously; he was the last man in the world to hurt anyone's feelings by intention, and did not perceive or quite misconstrued the other's discomfited expression. But Donelson Meigs, who was quicker of intuition, only eyed Ordway seriously and rather speculatively. He was wondering why a speech which would have been forcible and spirited coming from another man, should have so invincibly comic an effect uttered by Joe Ordway. Maybe it was his high-pitched voice, which seemed to lack the weight proportionate to his size; or maybe it was his face something like a dumpling and something like a Boston bull puppy. When poor Joe intended to be funny, the results

were generally dismal beyond belief; and too often when he was serious as at this moment, it was enough to move the gods themselves to laughter!

"Well, something's got to happen pretty soon," Don said encouragingly. "That last effort of the Germans was *the* last effort, everybody thinks. They've been practically at a stand-still since the Château-Thierry engagements, or else falling back——"

"They fell back once before, don't forget! I tell you we ought to be over there *now.*"

"Never mind, you'll get there, son, you'll get there," said the colonel with some gravity.

"Anyhow, this is as far as we go today. Stop at the corner by the Government Buildings," Meigs commanded Luther. Afterwards he remarked to the lieutenant on the style of their driver. "Looks like one of those dashing eighteenth-century highwaymen we used to read about in the novels of adventure, doesn't he? Claude Duval type. I'd like to paint him in costume," said Donelson who had been painting or trying his hand at other artistic endeavor throughout the forty-odd years of his life. "Is he one of the drafted men, do you know?"

"Yes, but he told me he was all set to go in, only the government beat him to it," said Ordway. "Must have been a little provoking. You can see he's just the adventurous kind that would jump at such a chance as this."

Donelson cocked a skeptical eyebrow. "After a year? Rather slow about jumping, wasn't he?"

"Well, of course, I didn't ask questions. I daresay there were complications at home. You can't tell what pressure they bring on the young fellows," said Joe, tolerantly, but somehow too loftily. He did not mean to be lofty; it was just that disastrous comic-cartoon manner, the older man reflected. Joe himself was a "young

fellow" not much the senior of this chauffeur, if at all; there were others among the new-fledged officers who affected a paternally superior attitude towards their men, but with no one else could it be so exquisitely absurd. Captain Meigs wondered what impression he produced on the rank and file; what, for instance, did the chauffeur think of his lieutenant? It occurred to Donelson that there are fates less tragic than that of never being taken seriously.

Luther, however, in common with the rest of Lieutenant Ordway's company, gave very little thought to him, even to make fun of him. Sometimes indeed they would parody his roly-poly strut, his piping delivery of orders; but as a rule they did not concern themselves greatly about the character of their officers. A boss is always a boss, the only difference in their relations with the army bosses being that they could not part at will. Luther was well enough satisfied; by dint of repeating the story of his intention to go in he had come to believe it himself, arguing ingenuously that if he had had any idea what it would be like, he would not have hesitated an instant!

## XI

In the meanwhile, there was Ellie. By this time, they were avowedly sweethearts; to be sure, both discovered that Roy was inescapable; every now and then he would glide out of some hidden corner of their minds, with his patient eyes, not accusing, not reproachful, only troubled and questioning. Ellie had a dozen spells by which she could exorcise him; she told herself that more than likely he had another girl by now, so that they were even as far as *that* went; or that plenty of girls kept two men on the string and as many more as they could get; or that there was no law against her changing her mind, and it was much better to change it now than after she and Roy were married; and so on. She did not write all this or any part of it to him, however; it was too difficult to explain in a letter, and besides if—if—if anything should happen, why, he wouldn't ever know, and—and—and in short, it seemed better not to tell him now. Luther's conscience would not let him off so easily; he had to forget his friend by main strength, as it were, but most of the time he succeeded.

There were moments, in fact, when he successfully forgot Ellie, too, without the slightest effort, although she never consciously gave him the chance. She wrote him notes, and went to see him at the post, she was forever sending or bringing him presents of the kind prescribed for the "soldier-boy"—as she did not fail to designate him fondly. Cakes and candy, cigarettes, writing-paper, drugs, lotions, every knitted garment known

to mankind, and some of which he could not even divine the use—all these in profusion and Heaven knows what besides did Ellie shower upon her "soldier-boy." Luther requited her with moving picture and ice-cream-parlor treats; he introduced her at the Y hut dances and was not ill-pleased when joked by the other men about his girl and her evident devotion to him. When did any man ever honestly resent being considered a perfect devil of a fellow amongst the ladies?

The summer went by and in the fall with the intelligence of the German retreat, scraps and hints of other information began to filter through the camp. It was said that troops were being rushed over seas in greater and greater numbers; every army-post in the country was in motion. Trains loaded with men and munitions went through in one unbroken stream all day and all night; presently, any minute, orders would come and it would be Fort William's turn. As it was, there was a constant coming and going; and trunks were being packed and crates knocked together, and the faces at headquarters seemed to change hourly. The *"Observer"* published a cartoon entitled "Uncle Sam at Full Stride"; and one after another Luther's officers dashed home on furlough.

"Ev'body says that alluz means a move d'reckly," Luther told Ellie, with excitement. "They alluz let 'em have a last chance t' see their folks. I guess it's 'over there' for ours all right."

She clung to him. "Oh, Loot, you *don't*——? What do they want of any more of our army? Th' Germans is getting outa France fast as they can go. They're talkin' peace right now; the paper said this morning both sides was goin' to send somebody and have a meeting and kinda settle it the war was over. It said the Germans

asked for it, or made the first move anyhow, so 't showed they knew they was beat."

"Yeah, I know. They had that all over th' post, too, but ev'body said not t' mind it, it didn't mean nothin'. It's just newspaper talk, er mebbe this here German proppergander—f'r t' stop th' Victory Loan, y' know."

"Stop the——? How d'you mean, stop it?"

"Why, there wouldn't nobody give nothin', if they thought th' war was as good as over, see? They'd think they might 's well hold onta their money."

"Oh!" Ellie, who had dutifully bought a Liberty bond on the installment plan, understood the argument, albeit she received it with incredulity. "Aw, I don't b'lieve they *would*—the Germans, I mean. I don't b'lieve they got the time to fuss round over no loan right now," she observed, shrewdly. "I b'lieve they sure 'nough wanta stop the war. If they do, you won't haveta go, Loot."

"Well, I'm willin' anyhow. Can't get over there any too soon f'r *me!*" said Luther in heroic vein. She looked at him with eyes of maternal worship, maternal terror.

For a few days more there was uncertainty; and then, one November morning, the blow fell. Ellie had gone down to her work, as usual, when about eleven o'clock they called her to the telephone. It was Luther; the orders had come; he couldn't say when they were to entrain, the men hadn't been told anything except to get ready. Sure, he would ask for leave! Oh, sure, they'd let him for a few hours! He heard her crying, and a flurry of voices asking questions, as he hung up the instrument. He wished this last meeting and parting were over; numbers of the men shared his position and his feeling. They had girls, too, and dreaded the good-byes, and revealed it to one another with a guilty relief in confession and companionship.

But after all Ellie met him with a desperately sparkling cheerfulness; she was dressed and decorated with even more than ordinary care, her cheeks skilfully touched up, her eyebrows freshly arched, hair in super-rolls, skirts super-short, heels super-high. In a flight of what would be considered justifiable extravagance by the feminine code, she had bought a hat out of the new stock; Mr. Stein allowed her a little more than the customary rebate to employees, "On account you're going to say good-bye to yer feller, ain't it?" said the Israelite gentleman kindly. It had a crown of gold stuff with a cascade of feathers, and the wide filigreed brim cast an artful shadow from which Ellie's eyes looked out with a novel and oddly seductive effect; she had noted that, as she tried it on with nervously trembling fingers and wildly made up her mind that she would have it, come what might, it was so becoming. She got her reward in Luther's admiring glances; he had never seen her so stylish, alluring, desirable.

"Tell you I'm proud of my sweetie," he whispered, seeking her hand under the table as they sat together in the cafeteria. Ellie let him hold it for a second, then withdrew it with a sure coquetry.

"Now you quit, Loot! Some of these perrascope guys round here'll get onta you."

"Well, let 'em! *I* don't care!"

"Yeah, but I *do!* 'T ain't as if we was married."

"Ain't we engaged? That's the same thing—or you b'long t' me just th' same, anyhow. I'd like t' see any other fella tryin t' take you away from me, that's all!" said Luther, heatedly. Roy was completely obliterated for the moment. "Aw, Ellie, you'd oughta be real nice t' me," he coaxed, with a tenderness that was at least half genuine. "This is our last time t'gether."

It gave him a sneaking satisfaction to see her turn her face away, biting her lips to keep her chin steady; but Ellie had plenty of spirit, reinforced by the consciousness of a signally successful make-up and general appearance which it would be well-nigh criminal to spoil with tears. "Oh say, don't less talk about it! Less just have all the good time we can, Loot!"

"Well, then——!" He surreptitiously caught her hand again.

"No *sir,* no, you can't, not here! I don't mean no good time that way, and you know it. Go *on,* Luther! I wanta taste them French-fried while they're hot. 'F you can manage to eat with one hand, I can't."

"Aw right!" Luther gave in, relinquishing her with a sigh; and he fell to on the French-fried himself, with a pretty hearty relish for so lovelorn a swain. They wound up with mince-pie opulently garnished à la mode, that is to say with a globe of ice-cream in the middle of each slice. The place was crowded with other "soldier-boys" and other Ellies, presumably, indulging in this confection or something else as merciless to the digestive apparatus; the victrola in the corner discoursed alternately the latest syncopated dance-tune, the latest sentimental ballad, *"I may be gone for a long, long while," "Keep the home-fires burning,"*—everybody hummed the refrains. On the wall above the counter where were ranged the tanks and trays and casseroles, a huge map displayed with chalk lines and groups of large-headed pins the day's advance of the Allied troops. It could be seen from anywhere in the room and comment buzzed around the tables, some of it jocose, some doubtful, some unduly sanguine. Outside newsboys were screaming a fresh extra every half-hour.

"It ain't worth while buyin' 'em," Luther said. "They

all got th' same thing in: *'Armistice Parleys Rumored.'* Nobody knows for sure what's happening, I don't b'lieve."

They walked about for a while in the bright, bracing autumn air. The queues in front of the film-houses were so long, it was an unconscionable wait before Luther coud get up to the desk at the Gayety to buy admittance to "The Soul of the World"; but once inside, in the secure darkness he established an arm around Ellie's waist, and now she offered no resistance. He was going away, and nothing else seemed to matter much.

"The Soul of the World" unfolded an idyll of two young lovers in war-time France; the heroine had blond curls, the sub-heroine black ones—they were sisters known to fame; the hero was a poetically handsome youth whether in the cutaway coat and high hat of French civilian life as it is pictured by the cinema, or in the uniform which he flew to assume upon the nation's entry into the struggle—on the very eve of the wedding, of course. Luther squeezed Ellie's waist a little more ardently, Ellie snuggled a little closer. There were interludes of scenes from French farm and village life, old gaffers in smocks, nice peasant women and children with wooden sabots, those reliable screen actors poultry, dogs, and horses. Anon, one saw marching batallions, chords of the Marseillaise rumbled distantly in the orchestra broken with the ominous dull thunder of artillery; then everything dissolved into a view of the British Parliament, another view of the premier sitting strained and tense while the hands of the clock above his desk moved slowly from five minutes of twelve to twelve—war was declared on the stroke as everybody knows!

The German advance began; every German looked like a fiend and behaved worse; when they were not driving

armored cars over the children and the chickens—*Aie,* for those incomparable artists!—or butchering the smock-frocks, they were holding abhorrent orgies which invariably faded out at the most interesting point; you saw the tanks, the cannon-fire, the high walls crumbling down. Everything went wrong; the hero had an encounter with the enemy—in a force double the number of his own—upon a night sortie, and was left for dead on the field. The orchestra was so sure of his fate it sadly delivered the first strains of Chopin's funeral-march; the heroine, gone crazy since the devastation of her home, came wandering across the torn and pitted terrain, and found but did not know him, though the orchestra murmured the bridal chorus from *Lohengrin,* hoping to remind her. By this time Ellie was crying outright, and Luther had to swallow a lump in his throat repeatedly; he held her close.

Fortunately there was still the sub-heroine, a host in herself! She appeared in the nick of time to get the two principals out of that particular fix, and managed to hide them in the loft of a half-ruined house while the German officers caroused in the rooms below. The hero came to, but in a most precarious state, and the heroine remained crazy, though with pathetic signs of returning sanity. More atrocities, more destruction—but faint gleams of hope shone through the clouds, according to the "title" flashed between the pictures. There was a glimpse of embarking soldiers—Ellie clutched Luther's hand hysterically—and of the Statue of Liberty receding as if seen from the deck of a departing transport. Fragments of *Yankee Doodle* whistled through the music—Hurrah!

In the end all came around happily. The hero and heroine recovered, escaped; the sub-heroine—one blast

upon her bugle-horn was worth a thousand men!—escaped with them, first blowing up the German general and his entire staff in the midst of their unspeakable sensualities, with one of their own bombs—*Aha! Rit bien qui rit le dernier!* The Americans arrived and swept all before them—Hurrah, hurrah! And to the gallant rythm of "Over There" the audience left the theatre. They were rather silent and sober in spite of the glorious issue to all the afflictions they had witnessed. The fact was the afflictions were were much too vividly and realistically set forth, and much too close to actualities to be balanced by any cheering panorama of American victories and happy family reunions. It was a simple, brave, touching story for all its cheap and hackneyed devices to work upon the emotions.

"Loot, d'you s'pose them Germans do act that awful —stabbin' babies 'n' all?"

"I guess so. People wouldn't hardly keep on tellin' it right along, if they wasn't some truth to it."

"Well, she good and got even with 'em, anyhow—that girl did. I was kinda expecting she'd do somepin like that, only I couldn't see why she didn't do it sooner. I'd 'a' thought of them bombs right off."

"She was scairt she'd blow up Henri and th' girl, too."

"Oh yes, that's so! Didn't you kinda hope they'd have the kids' mother come alive again in the end? Have it fixed so she wasn't killed, only knocked senseless that time the wall caved down on her when the cannon struck the house, you know? I thought sure they'd have her come alive, didn't you?"

"Naw, her bein' killed sorta fitted in with th' rest of it—that there old fellow they took 'n' cowhided till he dropped, 'n' them other people. 'F they was t' have had

'em all come alive, it woulda been kinda too much sugar f'r a cent, seems like. Them kids was cute, wasn't they?"

Ellie had not been much interested in the kids; they were always "coming in" at inopportune moments, diverting the story from the lovers on whom her sympathies were centered. "Bein' separated that way just when they was so *near* it," she sighed. "I—I couldn't help cryin', Loot. Seemed as if they mighta had *one* little time together, when they was just on the *edge,* 'stead of having the old war come along and break up everything.

"Yeh, 'n' th' worst of it was, if they hadn't 'a' had that run-in there in th' beginning, him bein' so jealous, 'n' her actin' up th' way she did, why they mighta been married long before! You couldn't help thinkin' what a darn fool waste of time that was. I bet they thought so theirselves!" said Luther with energetic conviction.

"I guess things like that has happened, though, lots of times."

"Sure, they have! Don' less go home yet, Ellie. Less —less do somepin—don't you wanta?"

"Well, what'll we do?"

"Oh, I dunno—somepin——"

They stood irresolute on the street-corner, her hand curled around the bend of his arm; the brief autumn afternoon was already waning, and the arc-lamps coming to life. The crowd went by, diversified with other soldiers and their girls, yet mainly a civilian crowd, careless and gay, as Luther noted with a wonder and an impatience he had never felt before. They acted as if they did not know there was a war, as if they thought everybody was going to live and keep on having a good time forever! *They* were safe; *they* were not in the army; that an eternally irrecoverable day was passing

meant nothing to them. It might be one of his last. A sudden frenzy of eagerness to snatch what he could from the insatiate grasp of time possessed him; all the ordinary end and aims of life, illuminated by circumstances, betrayed all at once an incredible futility. Of what use to work, save, govern and deny himself *now?* The hour was all he had. He looked down at Ellie, realizing that but for the order to march, he might never have thought of marrying her, but as things were——! He suddenly jettisoned every scruple. What did it matter what he did, when inside of three or four weeks or even less, he might not be at all? He spoke to her huskily.

"I ain't goin' t' be like that Henri, Ellie. I ain't goin' t' kinda git lef' at th' post th' way he done. What's th' sense our waitin'? Maybe I won't never come back, you can't tell."

She stood stock-still, gazing at him with wide eyes out of the sombre shadow of her hat, incredulous, almost suspicious, pathetically afraid to believe him. "Oh, Loot, I can't—that is—what'll folks think?—oh, well, it don't make no diff'rence, I s'pose—only what'll you do? About the license 'n' all, I mean?"

"Why, you hunt up th' marriage-bureau at th' City Hall. One of th' boys was tellin' me how he done th' other day. It's easy as easy. Come along."

She still hung back, or tried to. "I don't b'lieve I'd ought. Only after all—well, aw right, then!"

Indeed it turned out, as a matter of fact, to be easy as easy, everybody was so friendly, sympathetic, and anxious to help. The thing was over in no time at all; and they emerged from 'Squire Pabst's office in the City Building, Mr. and Mrs. Luther Nichols, only half convinced that it had been done, notwithstanding the marriage-certificate securely tucked away in Ellie's hand-

bag. They lingered awkwardly, overtaken by a strange shyness of each other, on the steps.

"Might as well go home an' tell Maw, I guess," Ellie said at length.

"Think she'll say anything?"

"Who? *Maw?* *Good*-night, no!" Ellie began to laugh excitedly. "I been running myself a little too long for her to beef 'round 'bout what I do—let alone she wouldn't wanta, anyhow. Maw ain't that kind," she added, with a flash of affection. "What day's today, Loot? Day of the month, I mean? I'm kinda mixed up. It's the ninth, ain't it?"

"Yeh—or no, it ain't either. It's th' tenth. I rec'lect it was figger ten on that there calendar hangin' up in th' judge's room."

"Ain't we a couple bright babies, though, not knowin' what date our own wedding-day was? Now we always gotta remember, it's the tenth of November. Oh, listen at me, talking portry!"

Luther burst out laughing boisterously. "Say, d'you know what? I've stayed over my leave!"

"You *have?* For the gracious' sakes! What'll they do to you?"

"I should worry! As long as I'm over a'ready, I might as well be over some more. They can't do nothin' but stick a day or so extra in th' hoosegow onta me. I should worry!" His recklessness was not assumed. All duties, rules and penalties shrank to an infinitesimal pettiness, ludicrous in comparison with the vital importance of the present moment. Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!

But tomorrow changed the face of the world. Before dawn the news went bawling through the streets, and the city wakened, and windows rattled up, and people lis-

tened only half believing. It was not till the bells in the fire-towers set to jangling madly, and the steam-whistles began, and the search-lights on the tall buildings went jigging wildly up and down the sky, that they credited it, and put on their clothes and sallied out to join in the crazy jubilations. Ellie was affrightedly overjoyed. "You won't have to go now, Loot! The old war's over! They won't make you go now! It's over!"

Luther heard her cheerlessly. He looked at her with a sick distaste that went so near to hate, it appalled him. The war was over; he would go on living; and what was this thing that he had done, that she had betrayed him into? How was he to face Roy?

LUTHER NICHOLS

BOOK II

# I

On one of those sultry evenings in September which residents of the middle-western section of the country will unanimously denounce to the visiting stranger as abnormally unseasonable, yet which recur as regularly as September itself, a taxicab went awkwardly and unhandily up to the curb in front of the garage at the point where Adams Road crosses a corner of the North Hill district, and there descended therefrom a high, wide, weighty gentleman in a dinner-jacket with a strong-looking black cigar in the side of his mouth. To the young men in overalls who came out from amongst the groups of cars he replied genially, yes, the engine had laid down, he didn't know what was the matter, the fellow would tell them—no, he didn't want another car, he would just as lief walk, he understood it wasn't very far, once you got out to the Hill—here, how much? Oh, that's all right.

With the last words a certain indispensable little ceremony being completed, the big man replaced his cigar, returned what was left of the handful of change to his pocket, stepped out into the suburban roadway, and stood a moment looking all around and up and down it. It branched off from Adams Road in the middle of a settlement of plain dwelling-houses, intermingled with the establishments of small tradesmen, green-grocers, florists and so on, but within a few hundred feet climbed a slight rise and curved out of view among thick trees and

bushes as if entering a park. On one hand trolley-cars and trucks ground along the glaring hot, dusty, unkempt street, children raced and screamed, shirt-sleeved men tilted in chairs on the sidewalks, the North Hill Engine-House and Hook-and-Ladder Company Number Seven blazed in red paint; and on the other, distant barely a stone's throw, were banks of fresh grass, cool hollows, the high, still woods. It was not, however, to contemplate this queer contrast or to philosophize about it that the visitor paused; as a native American he was familiar with American manners and cities, and to approach a wealthy, secluded suburb like the North Hill by way of some such unattractive locality as Murphyville nowise surprised him. He could cite dozens of Murphyvilles by other names but equally respectable and equally unprepossessing, camped on the outskirts of dozens of elegantly aloof North Hills, all over these United States in every city of any size; a fanciful person might have invested the juxtaposition with some allegorical significance as if it pictured a social organization as free, casual and hit-or-miss; but Mr. Daniel Levin was not fanciful, and his notably sound and ready intelligence was occupied, as usual, with the business of the moment.

"Where——?" said he, appraising the landscape, and grinning amiably around his cigar—"Where do I go from here to get to the Meigs house? Can you see it from the road? The places seem to be pretty big."

The taxicab driver explained that you went a piece, wouldn't wonder if it was as much as a mile—oh yes, it was easy a mile, 'count of th' road kinda winding round, you know—and turned off where they was two big pillas—stone pillas—the drive to the Meigses come down between 'em. You couldn't miss it. Just folla th' road till you got to them pillas; they was a sidewalk mosta

th' way, or anyway a cinder path. You couldn't miss it——

"Yeh, but ev'body's got pillas—you can't tell by *that*," some Samaritan interposed; and gave advice in his turn. "You keep on going towards th' river, mister. You know which way th' river is? Well, just keep on towards th' river; it's on *that* side of th' road, th' house is. Any place where you can see th' river from, that's th' side th' house is on, on'y it sets a good ways in from th' road. You c'n see it, if you know where t' look—they's a tower on one corner——"

A voice intoned from the recesses of the garage: "Tell him it's next entrance but one after he gets by th' Country Club where th' golf-links is, on th' other side th' road——"

"Aw, th' guy don't need to go that far, Harry. What's th' matter with him getting through where Loring's place begins? That would save a whole lotta walking. Listen, mister, you keep straight on till you get to one of these hedge-fences, a whalin' high one, but they's places where you can get through, on'y watch out for th' bob-wire——"

"Well, now, I don't believe I want to walk through anybody's private grounds," said the big man, still amiably but with decision. "As a rule, people don't like it."

"Why, they won't know nothin' 'bout it. They can't see you from th' house. Everybody goes through that way, it saves a lotta walking. It don't hurt, your just going through, and you save a lotta——"

Mr. Levin took out his cigar again, eyed it as if he were holding a consultation with it, and put it back with a little negative motion of the head. "I guess not," he said, good-humoredly immovable as before. "There's a road to walk on, and seems as if I might as well walk on it. Say the Meigs place is beyond the Country Club?

Well, that ought to be enough of a landmark for me. If I get stuck, I can find somebody to ask. Much obliged." And without more ado he started off, dinner-jacket, light pumps, cigar and all, an incongruous figure for this country-lane expedition, one might have thought, but for the fact that it was visibly a highly sophisticated country-lane, seasoned to such spectacles.

Some kindred reflection occurred to Levin himself as he tramped along in the early-coming twilight, now on the cinder paths he had been advised of, now on stretches of rough stepping-stones, or gravel, or even unstable wooden planking; anything was preferred, it would seem, to the comfort and banality of a cement walk. The roadside was broken, weedy, guttered here and there with rains; in places, tangled undergrowths verged upon it with a designed negligence; and the only lights were stationed at lengthy intervals in front of the pairs of pillars that, according to report, marked the entrances to the successive estates. He smiled to note about all this a chosen and resolute simplicity, a determination to be countrified that yet failed of its object. For there was nothing of the actual, middle-western country about the arranged landscape; it was merely a clever adaptation of classic and old-world motifs. Whatever the lane was meant to look like, it was obviously and emphatically a lane for smartly appointed automobiles and park hackneys rather than the spring-wagons or camping-outfits of the proletariat, and he himself in his evening-shirt was much more in place there than a countryman with pitchfork, overalls and a chin-beard would have been. For that matter, in the motor-cars that now and then sped by, he might catch a glimpse of some fellow evening-shirt or of bare shoulders and decorated feminine heads; and there were besides spirited little runabouts with a freight

of tanned youth in sporting-clothes of infinitely stylish slouchiness. By these and other tokens a citizen of the world as experienced as Mr. Levin was enabled to orientate the social position of the North Hill with the final exactness; it was a "nice place."

Steady walking brought him at last to a tall and rank-growing hedge which, with another smile, he conjectured to be the one whose occasional weak spots had been recommended to him; a little farther, the view opened on wide, well-turfed slopes and straight-aways of indefinite extent, rimmed with trees. A ravine parallel with the road made a difficult, natural hazard; the long club-house twinkling with regular rows of lights like an ocean-liner might be seen across the downs. Levin slowed his pace, looking about for some watchman, green-keeper or caddie to direct him, but the road was empty; on the opposite side of it, where the next entrance but one was his goal, the trees crowded impenetrably. He went on around another curve, expecting to encounter another set of pillars and electric-light pole, or perhaps one of the picturesque and inadequate wrought-iron lanterns with which he had observed some of the gates to be supplied. There was none, however, and at the curve following, the lane forked! No lights, no entrances were to be seen in either direction; the two ways lay silent and unpeopled as if in a sudden enchantment, and overhead a few pale stars were beginning to show. This last sight moved him to a mild objurgation; he was going to be late, and he disliked excessively being late at a dinner or any other appointment. The devil! No use turning back to inquire at the club, he thought; that would only mean more delay. He got out a match and struck it and held it to the face of his watch—*the devil!* This walking was a very unfortunate inspiration; but why couldn't those—somethinged

—garage-boys (Daniel said to himself, warming up), why couldn't they have told him about this branching-off place, instead of—he heard someone coming behind him.

In view of events variously explained as resulting from the War, the advent of prohibition, the disagreements between labor-unions and employers, and so on, it would not have been considered the part of wisdom at this date to linger in a lonely neighbourhood after dark, displaying a three-hundred-dollar watch to the gaze of chance wayfarers; so Mr. Levin expeditiously stowed his in his fob as he dropped the match and ground it out under heel; and by that time the other had come up—a tall man in what could be discerned, even by the failing light to be a chauffeur's uniform. Here was one who most assuredly would know his way about, and Levin forthwith accosted him.

"Er—hello!"

The chauffeur, who was striding past at a good gait, halted; there was a barely perceptible pause during which, nevertheless, Levin had time to feel himself in his dinner-array, being examined and graded, so to speak—a proceeding natural enough in the circumstances. "Sir?" said the other, raising a hand to the visor of his cap.

Levin checked an involuntary movement of his own arm to the salute; he had been Major Levin for a while not so long ago, but with most of his associates, officers and men alike, forgot or zealously tried to forget the fact and all its attendant facts. This young fellow had the habit of the army still, apparently; and that accounted, too, for his trim, upstanding figure, and his carriage about which there was a kind of modest dash.

"Do you know where the Meigs place is?"

"Yes, sir." He paused; then added civilly: "I'm go-

ing that way myself, if you would like me to show you, sir——?"

"Sure! You're just the man I want. Come along! I'm a stranger here, and it's confusing."

"Yes, sir. This way, if you please." He answered with a drilled and impersonal deference that, following upon Levin's speech, somehow made it seem unnecessarily explanatory and familiar; Daniel, who was an easy-going man, conceded in business circles to possess the qualities of what is known as a "good mixer," was a little taken aback. Moreover, his guide ranged along not quite beside, not quite behind him, with a nice regard for the proprieties that increased his surprise; not thus would any of the lads at the garage have comported himself. Scarcely even after months of discipline could a private command that attitude at once self-respecting and respectful. "Man must be English," he thought; and aloud, by way of experiment: "This puts me in mind of those practice hikes at night we used to have to take," he remarked companionably.

"Yes, sir."

This time Mr. Levin experienced the odd and not too agreeable sensation which visits us all upon those occasions when we unbend to a mannerly underling; the other's correct impassivity rebuked him; as a reminder of the fixed chasm between drawing-room and kitchen it was a hundred times more effective than the impudence—intentional or not—that seeks to make a bridge. "Shinny on your own side, Daniel, my son!" the genial gentleman counselled himself with rueful amusement. Decidedly this chauffeur must be English, although his voice and accent did not recall England; on the contrary, he spoke with a not unpleasant drawling twang that to Levin's ear connoted a certain state famous for the excellence of its

liquor, horseflesh and female looks. Its hills were even now to be seen on the far side of the river, beautifully soft and dim in autumnal mist, and set with tiny dots, links and circlets of lights. They had reached a point whence the view opened majestically; it was majestic even with the excursion-steamer standing up-channel for Lowery's Beach with the calliope blatantly discoursing *"The Holy City,"* even with a strong whiff compounded from the odors of dust and coal-smoke and withering foliage and gasoline and city streets sighing through the air from time to time.

"I suppose that's Kentucky over there," Levin said.

"Yes, sir," acquiesced the chauffeur with his defeating civility.

After that they went on in silence; and sure enough at the next gate but one, the chauffeur stopped. "This is the Meigs place, sir."

"Well, I'm very much obliged to you——" said Levin, feeling in his pocket, and covertly seeking a good look at the other's face. But the Meigs entrance was one of those which the owners had elected to illuminate with a lantern; it was an ancient and most interesting fitment from some Italian palace, of pierced and decorated metal, swinging overhead in the middle of a fine arch of iron-work, and owing to this position and the design of the lantern itself, an arabesque of small, fantastically cut shadows wavered incessantly beneath. Levin got only a fugitive impression of acute black eyes, and the lean, clean-shaved jaw common to chauffeurs, ball-players, jockeys, tennis experts, followers of the sporting professions everywhere.

"Oh, no trouble at all—thank you, sir!" He touched his cap again. Levin walked up the drive among the noble trees, and faintly spiced, cool warm zephyrs of

the Meigs park, thinking: "English to a dead certainty! No American boy would have taken a dollar that easy."

He was something less than fifteen minutes late after all, not a serious matter in the spacious and leisurely Meigs household. "I'm not terribly punctual myself, you know," the châtelaine of it assured him, putting aside his apologies with a graciousness that was entirely sincere. Mrs. Henry D. Meigs, widow of the financier, was now a good way past middle life, with grown grandchildren, but still dressed, corsetted, *soignée* to the utter perfection, still strikingly handsome, still possessed of a spontaneous and wholesome charm. It was unusual, Levin thought, surveying her across the table in the rich, shadowy dining-room with a tribe of servants manoeuvering noiselessly in the background, to see a woman of her age not merely so well-preserved—all the old women are well-preserved nowadays!—but so frank, kindly and fresh of heart after what must have been a lifetime of self-indulgence. Although he had had a pleasant acquaintance with the family for several years, it happened that he had never seen Mrs. Meigs in this intimate fashion in her own home until now; he found that the setting suited her, and that she somehow made its costliness and luxury seem as natural as herself. Donelson, the son yonder, rather distinguished with prematurely greying hair, talking with rapid gestures and smoking cigarettes between every course, was by contrast a personality of exotic suggestion. He was an artist of sorts; Daniel remembered having heard of sundry successful paintings by Don Meigs—and, to tell the truth, of other successes perhaps not so creditable.

"It's about time for that classic among questions, 'How do you like our city?' " he said, meeting Levin's eye. "I

ought to have asked you in the first moment, but forgot. Pardon the oversight!"

"Oh, my impressions aren't those of an entire stranger. I pass through here every now and then, you know, so I'm fairly well acquainted with the business district down town——" Levin paused, and before he could finish the other took up the word in his quick, restless fashion.

"That's rather non-committal. Our 'down-town' is precisely like all the rest of the 'down-towns' in the United States!"

"No, you're wrong there. Everyone of our cities has some kind of a soul of its own, I think."

"Soul maybe, but you'll admit there's a ghastly sameness about the bodies. Trolley-cars, department-stores, the Seventeenth National Bank, the Y. M. C. A., Dinglefugle Square with a statue of Horatius P. Dinglefugle in a marble frock-coat, U. S. Grant Park with a bandstand, beds of cannas and a couple of cannon from Gettysburg, Santiago or the Saint Mihiel sector, Elysium Cemetery with the bronze gates presented by Mrs. Adelia Slocum Tucknubbin in memory of her husband costing seventy thousand dollars——"

"Oh, now you've got Don started!" the lady of the house interposed with a mildly troubled look, notwithstanding her son's smile; she was of a literal cast of mind and honesty itself. "There's nothing of that sort here. Mr. Levin—that is, not exactly. Well, of course, the statues—— But Don's only making fun. He loves to make fun of everything and run down everything in his own country. Every time he comes home from Europe or anywhere he begins it. *I* don't believe in it—talking that way, I mean. I *like* it here."

"You certainly have a beautiful place——"

"No, no, I don't mean here on the North Hill, I mean *here* in America," Mrs. Meigs insisted with unwonted energy. "Don's all the time saying we aren't civilized." She sent him a semi-reproachful glance. "And really, Mr. Levin, you *know* we have everything absolutely the same way they do in England, and everywhere else one goes. There isn't the slightest difference—I mean, of course, among the people that *know,"* she amended so naïvely that Levin kept his face straight in sheer good feeling and appreciation of her own good feeling and simple loyalty. Donelson Meigs, for his part, laughed openly with the freedom of the king who can do no wrong. And in fact his mother was not in the least hurt; a note of tenderness sounded in the laughter.

"The trouble, as I see it, is that knowing how to be civilized isn't so widespread as my mother thinks," he said. "I'm afraid they don't teach it in the public schools, for example." He glanced around swiftly, and seeing that the butler and his corps of crisply skirted aides had momentarily withdrawn, leaned forward and added in an undertone: "Dan, you ought to have seen the weird crew that applied the other day when Mother had to advertise for a parlor-maid or some such functionary. *Ouf!* They chewed gum, and addressed her as 'dearie'——"

"Oh, not all of them, Donelson, just one——"

"Yes, and how about the other that said she'd like to get the job because you looked 'real motherly'——" He fell back, stifling another laugh as the servants reappeared. "Quite, *quite* civilized, aren't we? Just as much so as England or the continental countries!"

"I didn't mean *them,* of course," Mrs. Meigs said, not alluding to the continental countries. "It's better to get them in New York anyhow. I shan't try here again." And as Jones who was an invaluable man, so experienced

in the habits of "civilized" society that he might easily guess to whom or what these carefully cryptic statements referred merely from the manner of their utterance, came with a delicate arrangement of jellied fruits and cream laced with maraschino, Mrs. Meigs hastily dropped the subject. "We call that a *compote,* Mr. Levin, though it isn't, I suppose technically."

*"Specialtié de la maison,"* said Don, and lighted another cigarette. "If you care for sweets——?"

Levin helped himself mechanically. This talk had brought up his earlier encounters of the evening, certain comparisons, certain speculations; and he now said rather abruptly and earnestly: "After all, I don't know that that sort of civilization suits us. Perhaps it's as well we haven't got it over here. There's something impossible about it—for *us*—even undesirable. In a country where your barber may be President some day——"

"Only he never is, Daniel, he never is! You know it, I know it, everybody knows it, and we all keep quiet about it," said the other man with a kind of acid flippancy. "This is the land of opportunity, of equality and fraternity; we have no classes, no hateful social discriminations—but barbers don't become presidents! I may be warped in my judgments, but democracy, in some of its manifestations appears to me a terrific fizzle—what's that you say, *'dearie'?"*

"I—I wish you'd be more—I wish you *wouldn't!"* Mrs. Meigs objected uncomfortably. "I know you don't mean half of what you are saying, but other people might —it sounds——" Jones, in the course of his duties, once more departed behind the screen of intricately tooled and gilded Cordovan leather that guarded the pantry doors, and she finished in rapid warning. "He *might* understand. It's not—it's not *nice!"*

"He might leave, and that certainly wouldn't be nice. But never fear! Jones isn't going to take offense at my opinions. He has his of me, and probably airs them in his own circle. Turn about is fair play, and neither one of us pays much attention to the other, as long as each stays in his ordained class. The trouble with our people is that they don't know when they're in a class!" her son retorted. His sharp glance read dissent or recoil on both their faces. "You don't agree with me? Come, let's put our democracy to the test right here and now, and find out whether it's a fizzle or not!" He sprang up and seized an ornamental bellpull hanging by the wall. "I'll call Jones in and have him sit down with us——"

*"Donelson!"*

"Eh? *What?* You object?" said Don with a parade of surprise. His mother looked at him with a face of actual terror; even Levin had a vividly apprehensive moment, though telling himself that of course it was only a dare—and then Jones unconsciously relieved the situation by returning, this time with various intriguing bottles on a tray.

"A piece of mediaeval needlework—I picked it up in Perugia," said Donelson smoothly, handling with showman airs the strip of stuff that glowed dully with ancient color. "This bob or weight at the end of it was originally one of the handles of a church vessel, broken up by some impious vandal, stolen, looted from the sanctuary, no doubt—who knows?" He turned the loop of blackening silver about admiringly. "Interesting, don't you think? It doesn't really ring anything, you know. I had it hung merely as a decoration."

"Oh, I forgot it didn't ring!" Mrs. Meigs ejaculated; and both men began to laugh.

Nevertheless, every one of this well-behaved trio was

conscious of having skirted too narrowly some brink not to be approached even in fun; if not precipitate or dangerous, it was still distinctly unpleasant to contemplate. Donelson Meigs, for all his flightiness, would not have gone any farther with the experiment, if only on Jones's account; Don was humane after his fashion. But what was it about the mere idea that had so perturbed them? One might have fancied that some wind of truth, blowing suddenly and strongly, had shaken their edifice of conventional beliefs and complacent, unquestioned assumption, trying its foundations; it still stood firm, but for a flash they had all sensed unacknowledged weaknesses. And it was not without defiance that Levin said over the coffee in the drawing-room a moment later: "Well, fizzle or no fizzle, Jones's vote is as good as mine any day. That's something, isn't it?"

"Yes, indeed! Slavery went out with the Emancipation Proclamation," said Don Meigs. "But did democracy come in? Or civilization, if you choose?"

"There he goes again!" Mrs. Meigs said, in mock resignation. She turned to Levin with a definite air of ranging herself on his side, having evidently by some occult process of reasoning arrived at the conclusion that there was an argument going forward and that it behooved her, as a hostess, to support the guest. "I told you how it would be! We haven't the slightest idea how to live over here—he forgets all about our lovely bathrooms and central heating and things like that, you know! The servants haven't any manners, and the cities are full of terribly funny statues, and everything that isn't ridiculous is horrid! So that's settled, and now let's talk about something else! Have you seen anything of the Cooks lately? The Marshall Cooks, I mean, not the kitchen kind!"

Mr. Levin had seen the Cooks lately; he had been down to spend the week-end with them. Yes, all those Long Island country places were very attractive, even at this time of year when summer was ended and autumn had not fairly begun. But they didn't have much on the North Hill at that, he remarked liberally. "Naturally it never gets so hot as it does here. They have the advantage of you in climate; the sea air must help to keep their gardens in better shape——"

Mrs. Meigs exclaimed dolorously. "Oh, don't talk about their exasperating gardens! Any little New England door-yard is full of the most beautiful things that grow and flourish without any care at all! They all die here, in spite of everything you do for them. Don had a carload of rhododendrons and azaleas and things sent out from some place in Connecticut where they probably grew wild on the ash-heaps, and planted a whole hillside with them according to all the scientific rules about drainage and exposure and all that. I believe he and the gardener and the rest of the men on the place took turns sitting up at night to watch over them—and they never bloomed and by the end of the next season, every single one of them was dead! Those things are perfectly hopeless here. I suppose we ought to stick to our native plants."

"Ohio for Ohioans! Hooray! Are not the weeds of home better than all alien flowers?" said Don. "Mother's in a patriotic vein tonight."

"Well, as near as I could judge, walking up from your gate, the weeds of home make a pretty good showing. You don't seem to need rhododendrons," Levin said. "And those other places I passed—whenever one could get a glimpse, the landscape effects were beautiful. Everybody has a good many acres, haven't they? I felt as if

they had anyhow by the time I'd walked by them!" He smiled at a recollection. "The boys at the garage advised me to take a short cut, *'through Loring's place,'* I think they said, and told me it would be all right because I couldn't be seen from the house, but——" Here Mr. Levin wagged his head with the same friendly, inoffensive stubbornness of look and manner he had displayed during the incident. "I wouldn't risk it. Suppose I had got lost, which wouldn't have been at all unlikely? I might have smashed into the Loring green-house, or brought up at the front-door, and then I'd have had a job explaining. People have their little prejudices even against a person as handsome and intelligent and solvent-looking as I am, tramping through their property without their leave," he finished with gravity.

Mrs. Meigs looked in some uncertainty as to how to take this description of himself; he *might* be in earnest, and he really was a fine-looking man, though no matter how solid a chair he selected, you trembled for it when he sat down, she reflected, slipping the chain of her lorgnette through her fingers. But Don said that *that* showed him up conclusively!

*"You're* no true democrat, or you wouldn't care whose grounds you tramped over, or whose front-door you blew in at! Private, eh? What business has he to *want* to be private? Or by what right does he object to another free-born American making a high-road of his park? Aren't you as good as Loring?"

"The point is Loring is as good as I am!" said Daniel Levin, really serious for the moment.

"The young gentlemen at the garage don't see it that way. That freedom and equality and all that, I mean, are not expressed by a loud insistence on our own rights, but by a decent regard for the other fellow's."

"Oh, well!" said Levin, tolerantly. "They're just boys. Afterwards I fell in with another who was as 'civilized,' to use your word, as possible. It was agreeable and refreshing, of course, but do you know, there was something unnatural about it!" He gave them some account of the experience. "He was English, I think. Ours don't—well, they don't get that way."

"Oh, you can't tell. They learn sometimes. Who has an English chauffeur, Mother?"

But Mrs. Meigs didn't know. "What did he look like, Mr. Levin? The Ordways have a man that I think must be an Indian. At any rate I never saw a white man such a color. I asked Juliet but she only laughed and said he hadn't tried to scalp any of them yet."

"I didn't get a good look at him."

"The Ordways aren't home yet, anyhow."

"Why, yes, they've got back, Don. I saw Juliet on the links Thursday; she had gone around, and came in just as we were having our tea. It's very quiet just now, you know, Mr. Levin; hardly anybody home," Mrs. Meigs explained. "I tried to get a girl for you this evening, but they're all out of town, or going to be married so they have to stay in the house to see *him,* or something. It's always so at the end of the summer. You just had to go without."

Mr. Levin compassed a gallantry; he said that he had not gone without! And then he asked if he'd met Miss Ordway? The name sounded familiar. "At somebody's summer place? Was it Watch Hill or one of those places where people from here go so much? Or maybe it was at home in the winter?"

By home he meant the city of New York as they knew; and they thought it possible he and Miss Ordway might have met. "They know everybody, and go around a good

deal," said Mrs. Meigs. "Especially recently—since the war, that is. They made perfect mountains of money in oil or munitions or motor-supplies or something—only they were always nice people, you know," she interrupted herself quickly. "They aren't *new*—I don't mean anything like *that*. They've always lived here, and everybody's always known them. Juliet's rather tall, and looks stunning in sports clothes——?" She paused on an inquiring inflection, but Levin shook his head, and said he couldn't place her, couldn't place any of the family, in fact; and he asked some questions, in his turn, about other mutual acquaintances in the Ohio city and elsewhere.

He was leaving by a midnight train, and stalwartly refused the services of the car and chauffeur they pressed on him. "No, don't rout your man out at this time of night. I can walk back and take the trolley; I'd *rather* walk. These trips I have to take, there's too much riding anyhow," he said, and meant it. There was too much dining out in too many elaborate homes such as this, Daniel sometimes warned himself in private; he had friends everywhere. It was delightful, but once in a while it seemed to interfere with business. So the goodbyes were said, and he went off, with a very pleasing picture of that pretty woman Mrs. Meigs in glitteringly diaphanous draperies—prudently reinforced with brocade—in the back of his mind, stored with other recollections of the champagne and of some sort of *soufflé* with mushrooms which had been exceedingly toothsome, and of Donelson Meig's whimsical, erratic talk.

Knowing the road, it seemed shorter, as is often the case; he was surprised at coming so soon to a stone retaining-wall which he remembered succeeded—as you approached from the opposite direction—that famous hedge around the Loring place. He had not been aware of

walking fast; the night was too warm. A typical September night in this inland country, he said to himself, clear sky, starry with no hint of storm, yet close and still as if one were brewing—he stopped short.

He was rounding a curve; ahead of him the stone wall came to an end in a blot of shrubbery; hereabouts the path of cinders or tanbark, he could not tell which in the dark, gave way without notice to one of those laps of boardwalk, and Mr. Levin now performed a most singular act—singular, that is, for a sane, steady bachelor of forty-odd, even one who had been dining out somewhat lavishly. To wit, he gathered himself together and came down on the planks with a prodigious clatter, stamping along; and furthermore he burst into discordant outcry by which he intended to simulate an attack of coughing. It lacked the convincing quality—Daniel was not histrionically gifted—but it was sufficiently effective, notwithstanding. The group in front of him dissolved into its component parts with lighting abruptness. He would have run into them in another minute; it was a close call, he ejaculated inwardly, grinning to himself. As it was he passed on deaf and sightless; any impartial onlooker would have pronounced it a magnificent exhibition of presence of mind on all hands! Afterwards, slowing down, he thought with another grin: "Well, there's one girl that's not 'out of town'—most emphatically not!" Without doubt these North Hill groves were a popular locality for spooning—good reason why! But even under the shadows he was quite sure of having recognized the smart figure of that young chauffeur. *"He* certainly is good and civilized!" thought Daniel in benevolent amusement.

## II

Everyone knows that that nebulous body of our population spoken of by all the other bodies—themselves equally nebulous of outline—as Society is made up of selfish, greedy, calculating, heartless, brainless, soulless worldlings; daily we are notified of the fact through the public prints, we have it expounded from scores of lecture-platforms, preached at us from hundreds of pulpits, revealed scathingly on the stage and screen, set down in unmerciful detail by every human being in the country who can write, and innumerable hordes who think they can but are in error. It must be true since it is dinned about so constantly and energetically; and without doubt those exhibitions of honesty and kindliness and commonsense and right feeling occasionally witnessed among people reported to be in Society are merely the exceptions that prove the rule. A case in point is furnished by the style in which the Ordway family's sudden elevation to affluence was received; their circle may have been amused or envious or contemptuous, but in the main they behaved as if they were heartily glad! And so far from immediately mobilizing as an army of sycophants and axe-grinders, they treated the Ordways exactly as they had done before, with the same degree and kind of attention.

But this phenomenon may be accounted for by the fact that the Ordways had always been in and of Society; everybody knew them; they were even related to at least half of everybody. Unless by comparison, they had

never been thought of as poor. Joseph Ordway, Senior, had a position with a bonding company, and seemed to make that peculiarly indeterminate amount called with qualifying inflections, "enough." The house on Church Street, though perennially in need of some small repair, was by no means tumbledown; Mrs. Ordway could not afford Sawyer's or Miss Bodkin or Francine, or any of the other ultra-fashionable purveyors to ultra-fashionable wardrobes, yet she and Juliet were always dressed, shod, hatted presentably; Groton and Harvard were out of the question for Joseph, Junior; but a boy may get a pretty fair education at the public schools and university of his native town without jeopardizing his social standing; with girls, of course, the problem is so much more intricate that no one felt disposed to criticize the Ordways for sending Juliet to Miss Passport's four years and to a New York finishing school for a term or so afterwards, although it must have been just a little beyond their means, and undoubtedly took some scrimping and straining. All this goes to show that the family were precisely what Mrs. Meigs described them to be—namely. nice people, and not at all *new;* and when, during the first years of the war, some windfall of luck in oil, munitions or what-not made them rich overnight and millionaires—according to rumor—in six months, their world, unbelievable as it seems, did not grudge it to them.

For behold what an advantage those possess who are accustomed, after the manner of men, to fight with beasts at Ephesus! The simple fact that the Ordways were not at all *new* magically equipped them to cope with Society moneyless, and moneyed to keep on coping; they had nothing to learn or unlearn, no painful ladders to climb. They disarmed hostile gossip by the frankness and simplicity with which they enjoyed their good fortune; you

cannot laugh at people who are the first to laugh at themselves; nor can you snub people, who know every move and rule of the game as well as, or better than, yourself. In the beginning they committed any number of foolish extravagances about which they joked openly and unaffectedly. "We've never seen so much money before in our lives!" Juliet said outright. "Oh, we know we're being silly, and we don't care. *I* don't care anyway!" She bought a blooded saddle horse and joined the Riding Club; her mother bought a cloak of sables; they got rid of the Church Street house, recklessly letting it go for a song, moved out to the North Hill, enlisted a butler and half a dozen maids, made excursions into interior decoration and landscape gardening; every member of the family had a bathroom and a motor-car, every member of the family developed an expensive hobby. European tours and ocean travel in general being out of favor at this date, they had to content themselves with the longest and most comprehensive journeys North, South, East and West, this continent affords, and with winters at Coronado and Palm Beach. In fine, they spent riotously before they "got used to it," as Juliet said, and settled down to spending after a fashion that would have seemed riotous in Church Street days, but was merely in scale with life on the North Hill.

"We certainly are having the most gorgeous time," Juliet declared, with a gaiety and candor which it was impossible to connect with any sort of social guile; indeed, everybody knew that she had always been fearlessly and spontaneously outspoken. "Isn't it ridiculous, though? Our having such oodles of money, I mean. Maybe, after a while, we'll get to feeling as if we'd always had it, or as if it wasn't so much, after all. They say people always do. But right now——" She paused

as if mustering reserves of philosophy to contemplate the sumptuous vista. "I believe we aren't quite so crazy as we were!" she announced, and went on to explain naïvely as a child; it was charming! "Father wanted to give mother a diamond pendant for Christmas, but she wouldn't let him; they compromised on a gold vanity with her monogram in diamonds. That cost enough in all conscience. But it shows we're getting our feet on the ground anyway, don't you think?" Juliet paused again, meditatively fingering her fan, which was a confection of ostrich feathers in the height of that season's mode, long, loose and abundant, set into a handle of carved jade and lace-like gold filigree. "Sometimes I feel as if the whole thing were a little too good to be true —as if presently I would wake up, or turn back into Cinderella. Well, say I do!" She shrugged; the movement was inimitably graceful, spirited, characteristic. "Say I do! I've had it once! What's the odds?"

Juliet Ordway was considered a strikingly pretty girl even before the bonanza; nowadays, of course, with a free hand to exercise her own good taste or buy the taste of professionals, she could have carried off downright homeliness. But what defects she had were too slight to need catering; Juliet's beauty was authentic and enhanced by certain definite oddities, lustrous amber-coloured hair, big, clear, dark, greenish-hazel eyes. She had a dimple in her chin, a good figure, the really lovely, fine-grained, delicate and white skin that seems to be the especial complement of all the shades of auburn hair. Evening-dress revealed her ravishingly; nevertheless everyone said that a sporting costume suited her conspicuous style best. In riding-coat and breeches, for instance, she parodied the other sex with an infinitely alluring roguery, like Shakespeare's masquerading ladies in pages' small clothes.

About the less tangible endowments there existed a strange diversity of opinion, some people contending that she was very bright, and chose to ape the ingénue, others that she was not above the average, it was merely the habit of headlong speech and action that invested her with a specious appearance of originality and cleverness. Perhaps Donelson Meigs summed up the findings both for and against her when he said that Miss Ordway was one of the not too numerous people whose intelligence is stronger than their character—and perhaps again Donelson was only turning a smart phrase; he was reputed to be rather given that way.

At any rate the man with her looked at her a little curiously, wondering just how much of this devil-may-care attitude was, as he privately put it, on the level; he believed himself to know something about the sex, and they were all good at bluffing, but not many of them, in his experience, would have picked out such a subject for a bluff. Also they generally gave you a lead so that you might get some inkling of what to say in return; whereas now, after some searching, he could only comment tritely and inadequately that we might as well get all we could as we went along, because we were going to be a good while dead.

"Yes, that's just the way I feel!" said Juliet, as enthusiastically as if she had never heard this well-worn piece of wisdom before. "You're sure of it now, anyhow; and who knows what may happen to you tomorrow? I don't want to take any chances—though they do say women are born gamblers."

"How about it? Ever play poker?"

"No. I'm pretty fair at auction, though."

"Well, let's hunt up somebody——"

They got up and explored the Country Club ball-room,

weaving in and out among the dancers and the chairs along the wall, and behind the dais where the piano and snare-drum and saxophone were snorting and thumping out the latest syncopated air; and finally gathered together a table and descended to the basement card-room. At three o'clock in the morning they were still sitting there amongst the scattered cards and cigarette-butts and scraps of broken flowers; the three men had had a round or so of high-balls, and there were stale glasses, and melted ice was slopping about in a bowl; but the one girl drank only Apollinaris, and kept her clean, fresh, daring pose, winning or losing with an even good-humor, until her brother came and haled her off against the others' protests.

"You ought to have stopped long ago, Ju. It doesn't look well," he grumbled in the privacy of the automobile, driving homewards; it was only a step from the club gates, past the Meigs place to their own, and Joe had brought the car over himself. "You never seem to know when to stop."

"There isn't any time to stop in a card game," said Juliet, yawning. "At least it wouldn't be very sporting to stop when you are ahead, and awfully bad business to stop when you're behind! You've just got to keep on until somebody else makes a move."

"None of the men would until you did, you know that as well as I do," Joe retorted. "I tell you it doesn't look well. Oh, I know lots of the girls do. It's all right, but you don't want to run it into the ground. It's the way you do with everything—go at it till you wear it out, I mean. You think that's *sporting,* but men don't do that way, and they don't care particularly about a girl that does that way——"

"The trouble with you is you never get a chance to do

anything," interrupted the other tartly. "I don't see why you ever go to parties. If you'd dance or *something*—— Seeing you stand around gets on my nerves. I want to go and ask you where it hurts the worst? And then you always get so cross when you have to wait for me, or come and get me like to-night. You don't *have* to have me on your mind; I can take care of myself, and somebody would have brought me home, and I wouldn't have got lectured all the way. *I* can't help it because you don't have a good time."

Joe had no answer or would not trust himself to make one; he almost always left the last word to Juliet in these brisk little skirmishes—which were of not infrequent occurrence—fearful lest they would presently degenerate into mere squabbling, childishly or womanishly spiteful. There were times when even silence ironically gave him the air of being childishly or womanishly sulky, as if, do what he might, dignity would still escape him. Now he sat dumb, scowling and twitching at the wheel, angry with Juliet for being so headstrong, angry with himself for being so thin-skinned. It was true that he never had a good time at parties. He was too fat, or thought himself too fat to dance; at cards he was the foreordained victim of bad luck or bad play, whether his own or his partner's did not seem to matter much, since the result was invariably the same. That is to say, he would cut out after a rubber or two, and somehow, though lingering wistfully around the tables, he never got an opportunity to cut in again; he would saunter away finally, simulating indifference as well as he was able with rage in his heart—rage that he knew to be petty and ludicrous. He was not exactly shy, and without doubt some of the girls looked at him kindly enough, but Joe was too absorbed in mentally looking at himself to respond to their inno-

cent signalling—and besides it was only the less attractive and popular ones that signalled! He himself did not know why he went to parties; but the fact was that he went to every successive one, cherishing the desperate, unacknowledged hope that this time some of the splendors he was forever imagining would come true. Scenes, incidents, whole conversations in which he naturally bore the central and most brilliant part might by some miracle actually take place; he dreamed of being *the* Joe Ordway, privily pointed out, whispered about, quoted, a little feared, like—shall it be confessed?—like Mr. Donelson Meigs.

The last-named sprightly gentleman would have been amazed and embarrassed and not at all flattered had he suspected Joe's unhappy ambition. Donelson's gifts were perhaps not so much out of the ordinary as his public believed, but he was at least clever, humourous and honest enough to shrink with distaste and a certain humiliation from the notion of being elevated to a pedestal as a hero. Moreover, the character of a hero's followers bears witness to his own; and Joe was one of those whose allegiance is somehow not valued or desired by anybody. The poor fellow knew it after a fashion; he knew that the other man did not want to be trailed by a little, fat, pink youth, mirroring his moods and manners, repeating his speeches or trying to match them, studying and copying him with caricature-like results. So Joe kept his distance, only drifting about within hearing of Mr. Meigs's talk at the clubs and elsewhere, glad of his notice but careful not to thrust himself upon it, observing his friends with envy, aware of the sorry figure he cut, but confident that no one else was aware of it, wherein, indeed, he was right; he had always been, possibly always would be, negligible. He treasured what-

ever Donelsonisms he might catch up, crumbs from Dives' table, and would sometimes practice them at home or upon circles where he thought it unlikely their source would be recognized; but lo, these supposed brilliancies, as uttered by him, fell distressingly flat! The jokes were without point, the epigrams ceased to be epigrammatic. What was worse, they often underwent a painful and dangerous transformation; Don's airy malice became brutality, his humor inexplicably acquired coarseness. Joe pondered this phenomenon in vain; it was as if a poignard had turned into a bludgeon within his grasp. Impossible to understand how two people could recite the same words with so diametrical a variation of effect! He questioned hopelessly whether the older man did not owe his reputation to some bounty of nature in the way of atmosphere, something which was his without effort, like his indefinably distinguished presence, his grey hair, his vivacity of movement; or perhaps it was only that he had a flair for the right moment, the right company wherein to set off those small, crackling, tin-foiled fireworks that flickered out so dismally whenever Joe attempted them. The objection to this theory was that Joe's own original fireworks had a habit of missing, too! Whatever sagacity in selection Don Meigs may or may not have been endowed with, Joe certainly was without any; he seemed to himself to be eternally saying the wrong thing or having it said to him when he was not ready for it. His was what Gallic insight has classified as staircase-wit; it supplied him with repartee too late for it to be used. Yet nobody spoke or thought of him as dull; the melancholy truth was that nobody ever really spoke or thought of him at all.

Joseph was in his last year at law-school when the family fortunes took the upward turn, and graduated at

about the same time as their spectacular arrival at millionairedom. The momentary concentration of the limelight on themselves and their affairs disconcerted, even dismayed the young man whose tormenting self-consciousness would not allow him to exult freely and carelessly like the others. Joe thought this exuberance unbecoming to their caste, in bad taste; by way of balancing it, he himself affected a high, reposeful indifference which for some reason or other everybody found unconscionably funny. In moments of dismal enlightenment, he suspected that he was being laughed at, but was still helpless. Some ill-disposed fate had decreed that yearning to play Hamlet he should be cast for the rôle of Dogberry, and his very rebellion was grotesque.

The brother and sister did not get along well together, a circumstance not without precedent among our first families, and maybe even among second and third ones. They were as radically unlike in temperament as in physical make-up, but that of itself probably had little to do with their eternal disaccord. There were no jealousies, no meannesses, only an incessant trivial friction. In strict justice, Joe was mainly to blame; Juliet was too light-hearted, perhaps too light-headed to concern herself over her brother, his behaviour and the impression he made. Like all the rest of their world she refused to take him seriously; for that matter she refused to take anybody or anything seriously. She was fond of him, even while she complained of his nagging, his interference and his attempted tyrannies; she would have stood up for him in any quarrel, were he never so much in the wrong, she would have lied valiantly to shield him from punishment no matter how just and merited; but she would not obey, and would not heed him! On the other hand, ever since he was a solemn, spectacled, earnest

little boy constantly adjured by his elders to take care of little sister, Joe had had Juliet on his mind. He was at heart devoted to her and inordinately proud of her, but this very pride and devotion engendered a miserable touchiness, and, as they grew older, a distrust that put him to shame. It seemed to him there was something audacious about so much beauty and unbridled spirits, as if Juliet tempted Providence. He never knew what she was going to do, he never knew what she was going to say; he could not rely on her word even when she could be coerced into giving it. The possibility of monstrous results never deterred her from monstrous indiscretions, or what Joe considered such; that she had so far escaped filled him with as much irritation as relief. She would never learn anything until she had a hard lesson, he thought, all the while devoutly hoping that the hard lesson would never be inflicted. Sometimes he talked to their mother and father gravely, with his round, florid face, his near-sighted eyes very worried behind the shining spectacles; Juliet was doing thus and so; Juliet was making herself conspicuous; people were gossiping about Juliet; it was their duty to try and control Juliet; of course *they* knew in the family that Juliet was all right, but outsiders, etc., etc. And what came of this sober and heartfelt discourse? Why, nothing whatever! As like as not, before he got half-way through the tale of Juliet's latest misdemeanor, Mrs. Ordway would be smiling; or she would interrupt with soothing words which were still more exasperating. As for Joseph, Senior, he never could be brought to see the most minute flaw in Juliet, and had not too much regard for the opinions of Joseph, Junior, anyhow. He listened with humorous patience; the session always ended with Joe's retreat baffled and indignant and conscious of futility; he

would hear their indulgent laughter as he closed the door.

Now here tonight was another sample of Juliet's foolhardiness—and she would not pay any attention to him and none of them would pay any attention to him, he thought savagely, swinging the car into their drive. It was morning; the eastern sky showed a widening crack of light; all the wood was rustling and waking up; the house stood above them on the rising ground around which the roadway wound, with its chimnies and windows and the fine stonework of the façade already distinct in detail. This was a nice hour to be coming home; if she had been dancing, he wouldn't have had a word to say—dancing was all right, you could dance as late as you pleased; but loafing around in the grill, playing cards with a bunch of men, the whole place smelling like a barroom, shoving money around, swearing jocularly at the luck—it was off color, somehow. Why couldn't she be made to understand——

"What are you going round the back way for?" Juliet asked.

"I don't want to run right under mother's window, and wake her up. You've got to think of somebody besides yourself once in a while, you know, Ju."

"Mother's always awake when we come in, anyhow," said Juliet, unrebuked; she sat more erect, looking out. They were coming to the flight of steps, with pillars and stone urns dressed with ivy by which one gained the terrace and ultimately the garden entrance to the living-room in the big south wing of the house; heavy shrubbery clustered at every turn of the drive, but on the other side the ground fell away abruptly to a ravine planted in rock-garden fashion with a trickle of water falling into an irregular rock-bound pool at the bottom of it; an in-

triguing little sandy path, stayed with steplike courses of flat stones from descent to descent, twisted off among black hemlocks in the direction of the service-yard. Someone came along the path at this moment, and Joe brought the machine to a halt.

"I told What's-his-name to wait here," he said, as he handed his sister out. Juliet sprang down light and sure-footed as a cat; she stood an instant on the lowest step of the terrace flight, turning her head towards the path where What's-his-name, that is, their newest chauffeur—they had tried several without satisfaction—now appeared. This one was a tall, well-set-up man, and he advanced confidently.

"Er—ah—we aren't always so late as this; we don't keep you up every night this way," said Joe, with a needless and entirely too eager display of consideration, his sister thought impatiently. After all, the man was paid to wait on them, paid to sit up, paid for his loss of sleep; to be sure the difficulties with his predecessors had arisen chiefly over this same matter of late hours; but Joe didn't have to go on his knees and apologize to him, for all that. However, that was Joe all over, she concluded with swift indifference. The new man was looking at her with black, rather bold eyes. Juliet looked him back fearlessly for a moment while Joe added some other order, then she scampered up the steps. She was smiling to herself as her brother, breathing a little short—for the climb winded anyone of his weight—caught up with her.

"He looks all right, Joe—the new one, I mean."

"Yes. Has decent manners, anyhow."

"How did you get hold of him?"

"Why, he answered the advertisement. But it turned out he was in my company over at the post. He used

to drive the officers' flivver. Of course he dropped out of sight after everything broke up over there, but I remembered him when he spoke of it—remembered he was a good driver. That accounts for his manners, too; they learn to know their place in the army."

"Do they?" said Juliet absently. "Maybe What's-his-name has, but you can't tell always. What *is* his name?"

"Something-or-other Nichols."

They reached the glass double-doors which, in a row of pairs at measured and stately intervals, gave upon the terrace from the living-room, and Joe, still puffing, fished for his chain with the cluster of keys chinking at the end of it, and tugged it out of his hip-pocket. Juliet stood by watching him as he bent over fitting the key.

"I believe I've seen him before somewhere," she remarked casually.

"Shouldn't wonder. He's been driving for Mrs. Grace; he gave her for his reference. I asked why he left, and he said there wasn't any trouble, it was just kind of slow with the old lady, and he thought he'd like it better where there was more going on. He's come to the right place for *that!*" said Joe, shortly, yet half laughing; he held the door open. "Let's hope he'll stick, anyhow."

"Oh, he's pretty sure to stick—for a while, at least," Juliet said with another small smile.

## III

LUTHER'S regiment was mustered out among the earliest in the spring of 1919; and he returned to civil life with his ex-service-man's uniform; with the papers of an honourable discharge in his pocket; with a number of new tastes and habits acquired not without cost during his term of employment under that great agent of civilization, the army; with a wife whom he persistently assured himself he had *not* filched from his best friend; and to tell the truth with very little besides. The discharge-papers were about all that those pockets of Luther's contained, and, valuable as they were, there were moments when it seemed as if an inconsiderable amount of cold cash would have replaced them adequately. Upon examination he found that he did not know where or for what his pay had gone, and concluded hazily that it had gotten away from him somehow—it was easy for a man's money to get away from him in the army—there was nothing to do with it but spend it—all the boys had the same experience and would tell you the same thing. Luther did not disapprove of this feature of military life, or indeed of any feature; on the contrary he rather fancied it all. A soldier goes about his business with a mind unharrowed by questions of right or wrong, duty or pleasure; they are all settled for him by the superior authority issuing orders for practically his every action. Luther found it not uncomfortable to be thus eased of responsibility; he was seldom restive under discipline and had no very ardent ambitions. As a mat-

ter of fact he would readily have re-enlisted, had it not been for the widespread unpopularity of that course. Nobody was going to re-enlist, and Luther was swept along with the current, planning and bragging like the others about the job he was returning to or the job he meant to get; he was not more confident, sanguine and visionary than the rest of the world in that mad year. One of the few prosaic ones who kept their feet on the ground was Ellie Siefert—a thousand pardons!—Ellie Nichols. Ellie was under no illusions about the manner of getting jobs and of returning to them; she had been at work ever since she was fourteen and started out to run errands for Baumeister down at the corner grocery and 'tend store while he went to lunch. That was more years ago than she ever let anyone know; but in the meanwhile she had advanced from that earliest two dollars a week, by grade after grade of unflinching attention to business to twenty times that sum and the position of forewoman—again, pardon!—of fore*lady* at Stein and Merkel's. 1919 found *her* with money laid by in the Poplar Street Loan and Building Association, with certain well-matured projects involving the borrowing of more and launching out for herself, and with a husband whom she contrived to worship and to be fanatically proud of without putting the slightest trust in his honesty or ability, let alone his faithfulness! Fortunately she could not spare much time to be jealous: the store absorbed it all. That woman's place was the home was another concept about which Ellie had no illusions; even a home with Luther and all the attendant privileges of cooking his meals and mending and washing for him did not—as she would have said—"appeal to" her. There was no adventure, difficulty and glitter about it; and perhaps she had been making her own living in essentially

un-domestic ways too long. By this time she was definitely resolved to be Madame Elise with an exclusive hat-shop patronized by the swell trade, and a nice line of toilet and beauty-parlor supplies on the side.

This last was at the suggestion of Mr. Morris Federmann, a gentleman who traveled in the interests of wholesale millinery, with headquarters in New York City. Twice a year he went upon what he facetiously alluded to as the alfalfa circuit, that is, visited the principal cities of the western-central states; and beginning by making Ellie's acquaintance in the course of business, he now bade fair to be her most enthusiastic supporter. Indeed it was to him that the prospective Madame Elise looked to finance her undertaking in part, and she sagaciously deferred to and acted upon his advice. "You gotta hand it to 'em!" she observed to Luther. "They know how to make money, and they ain't so scared of spending it either, like people think they are. Of course they're careful and they don't let nothing get away from 'em, and they screw every last ounce of work outa you; but at that, they ain't much different from everybody else. You can always get back at 'em some way, and they don't mind. They like you better. Once they like you and think you're smart, they'll do anything for you. Look at Federmann, f'r instance. He's going to take my note without no security nor nothing, just because he b'lieves I'll make good. I says to him plain out: 'Mr. Federmann,' I says, 'you know I mebbe can't make this thing go, and if I don't, you'll just be ten thousand dollars in the hole!' I says, 'I done pretty well here at Stein's, but that ain't saying I got the sense to run a business. You can't ever tell,' I says. 'But I know I got the *sand,* good and plenty,' I says, and then he interrupted me real quick. 'I'll say you have!' he says, 'I'm willing to take

a chance on you, Miss Siefert—— He don't know I'm married, you know, Loot. I don't tell nobody for fear it might kinda go against me in business——" She paused, looking at him at once apologetically and expectantly; it would not have displeased her had he been vigorously hostile to this piece of business discretion. But Luther saw nothing objectionable about it.

"Seems funny," was all his comment. "You wouldn't think nobody'd care."

"Well, they might get to thinking a girl didn't have her mind on her job, being married—or somethin'—I don't know—anyway, it seems like I'd better not let on nothin'," said Ellie, obscurely disappointed; but her interest in the theme carried her along, bearing down sentiment. She went on talking about the store she had her eye on, the stock, the decorations, the problems of management. Her present resources would compass the rent of only one room with a display-window and a narrow door in front, and an alcove for working partitioned off at the rear, a tiny place, but round the corner from the most fashionable square in the shopping district. The near neighbourhood of the great nowise abashed or overpowered Ellie; far better be a dog among kings than a king among dogs! Moreover, she had been sitting at the feet of Federmann.

"He says that's regular New York style; have a little hole in the wall off the Avenue, and a French name, and everything kinda cute but refined too, if you know what I mean. It's all gonna be this here light grey, French grey they call it, inside. There ain't room for but just one counter along one side with the jewellery and toilet stuff; the other side he says I'd oughta have mostly looking-glasses framed into the wall, and one of these vanity-stands with one little chair for people to sit when they try

on, and a few hats, real swell ones, standing round on kinda high holders. And he says not to have more than two-three hats in the window, with mebbe a big, elegant fan, or once in a while a bunch of real flowers, and there's to be a little tray with some of the manicure things, shell or ivory ones, on it, and the jars of Crame Janeese. That's this face-dope he's got hold of that I'm gonna sell, you know, Loot. Look here, here's one of 'em."

Luther dutifully inspected a miniature amphora of deep blue pottery with small loops set high up on either shoulder of it, handle-fashion; the screw-top bore a coin-like design of undraped figures and an altar, rimmed with the legend *"Crême Janice"* in a species of modernized classic lettering. Opened, it appeared to be firmly packed with a compound like butter, glistening white, exhaling faint pleasing odours. He sniffed at it and turned it about with amused curiosity, masculine and patronizing.

"Smells good. What's it for?"

"I told you. It's a face-pack," said Ellie, to whom this mystic term was amply explanatory. "There's a whole line of 'em—Janeece preparations, I mean——" and herewith she reeled off a bewildering list, *Baume Janice* (for the scalp), *Eau Janice* (an astringent), *Savon Janice* (a cleansing-cream), lotion, dentifrice, powder, rouge, *Janice,* a perfect battery of defenses against every recognized or imaginary enemy of female good looks. Luther's attention wandered; he was not keenly interested in a scheme which left him and his prospects, not to mention his personal prejudice, his advice and approval, entirely out of the reckoning. But her final words arrested him. "Federmann says there's big money in it. He's bought inta the Janeece company, and he wants

it pushed. I guess that's one reason he's so friendly about backing me," she said acutely, yet with a certain sympathy, a certain respect. "Federmann's no easy mark, and he ain't in business for his health, nor I ain't either. He lets me have the Crame to sell on commission, of course, so he knows I'll sell it! You just watch my smoke!"

It was a dedication; her face which, under a rich mask of purely ornamental "preparations"—from *Janice* laboratories, very likely!—already showed signs of hardening and sharpening into the lines set there by work, fatigue, anxiety, the habit of making decisions and taking the initiative, wore momentarily an uplifted look. However grotesque the words in which she articulated her ambition, however grotesque the ambition itself, who will say that Ellie did not share the vision without which nothing can be accomplished? If the will to conquer combined with a sincere belief in the validity of her enterprise may count for anything, she was the equal of any giant of commerce or industry the world has ever seen. Luther viewed her remotely disturbed. She was the same Ellie, fairly good-looking when she was dressed, fairly attractive in spite of her dubious front teeth, the same girl who had been his friend Roy's but was "crazy" about himself, who was now his, though the sense of possession sat very light on him. It was the inhibitions surrounding her that had made Ellie desirable; it was the intrigue that had captured him. She was still "crazy" about him, and still he yielded himself indulgently to her adoration; but now, all at once, she appeared in a new and, to be candid, not wholly agreeable guise. There were disquieting potentialities about it; it pricked his self-conceit that she had made and was making more money than he; that ten thousand

dollars awed him against his will; and for her to be so engrossed in business reversed their natural positions. With all this about Federmann and Créme Janice and the divers ins and outs of her trade, she might as well be another man, Emil Schulte endlessly talking his garage, Hermann endlessly talking railroads! It left Luther in a detachment that was somehow unbecoming.

"Well, I guess I don't come in on this proposition," he said at length with a kind of uneasy lightness. "I'd make a hit selling ladies' hats—nit! Of that there face stuff either. Nope! I guess I ain't in it on it."

"You got your own kind of job," said Ellie soothingly. "There's plenty to do outside of millinery and toilet-supplies anyhow. Don't you worry! You'll get something." To see this hero in the unheroic posture of a man out of employment, out of pocket, and living on his wife diminished not a whit Ellie's high evaluation of him; let her god's feet be of clay or let him be of clay all the way up, for that matter, the discovery never shook a woman's devotion yet!

To do Luther justice he disliked taking Ellie's money, disliked heartily being idle; the trouble was that no job worthy of his consideration had so far offered itself. Times were changed since 1917. The old scale of living and wages for first-class chauffeurs must be discarded; at least, Luther had discarded it, his standards rising to match all the other standards. The idea of going back to Schulte at the earlier rates was preposterous; on the other hand, Emil obtusely found the present ones preposterous; they could not come to an agreement, and, after prolonged dickering parted with surface good-will but each one prophesying dire enlightenment for the other. *"He'll* find out!" Luther said sourly. "Emil's older'n what he used to be, and I guess things

has kinda got ahead of him here lately, but *he'll* find out!" And Mr. Schulte summed up on his side: *"He'll* find out! Luther's young and there's a whole lot he ain't learned yet, but *he'll* find out!"

Possibly neither was entirely in the right or wrong. Schulte's Garage and Auto-Livery kept going somehow and made as good a showing as formerly without Luther's services and in the face of his pessimistic forecasts. And as for Luther, whether he was learning or not, he went about to all appearances confident and jaunty, satisfied to bide his time until the best bidder, or the one who came nearest his price, turned up. There was so much money, so much squandering, so much parade and self-indulgence at this date that his attitude was not unique or indicative of moral slackness. Everybody's vision was a little out of focus, unable always to distinguish things and actions in their true proportions. After a while Ellie's ten thousand ceased to loom so large in Luther's eyes; it had seemed so easy to get. Progressively, it occurred to him that he also might borrow ten thousand of somebody, Federmann, by choice, and start the garage and auto-livery business of his own that he had dreamed of years ago. Why not? The whole country was prosperous, active, making money hand over fist; good times were here and everybody said they had come to stay, why should he not take advantage of them? To his surprise and chagrin, Ellie uncompromisingly vetoed the proposal.

"Oh, my goodness, Loot, you can't do nothing like *that. You* ain't *me.* Federmann wouldn't let *you* have no money just on your say-so, nor no other business-man nor no bank wouldn't, leave alone they can't anyhow, on account of the law—the banks and mortgage-and-loan companies, I mean. Anyhow you'd have to pay in-

terest, and it ain't so easy digging that up every three months, I'll tell the world! I got money put away, too, to help me out the first year or so, because I knew it would take me that long before my business begun to pay, maybe longer. If I get an even break on it for five years, it's as much as I'm expecting; after that I'll be making something, or I'll sell out and quit—if the sheriff don't beat me to it! At that, I gotta *work;* there ain't any business going to run itself and pay off ten thousand dollars. Now, you got a good trade, you stick to it, and don't try nothing that you don't know nothing about. You stick to shuffooring, like you always done, and let the guy that hires you worry about where your money's to come from. You'll get a job directly."

"Aw, I was just talking. I don't half mean it," Luther protested, putting as good a face as he could on his mortification. At the instant he hated Ellie; he hated her for her loud, domineering way, for her unwifely superiority of knowledge and experience, he hated her because of her money in his pocket, and alas, because she was "crazy" about him. The pique, however, was not strong enough to move him to seek counsel and backing from others, as a more stubborn or more reckless man might have done; Luther had let a good many of the principles of thrift and right conduct in which he had been brought up go by the board but he was still too reasonable, too cautious to plunge into any enterprise involving borrowing and outlay, merely to discomfit his wife. Ellie's talk opened up fearsome vistas; it might be true that he knew nothing about business; and at any rate, even should he turn out to be fully as capable as she to cope with loans and interest and Federmanns and sheriffs (horror!) Luther emphatically did not want to try.

He put in the time somehow, hanging around garages (not Schulte's!), loafing and exchanging talk with other ex-service men out of employment, answering advertisements, picking up a job of driving now and then from some trucking or private-expressman. This branch of the business developed so many unsatisfactory features that Luther came to look upon it only as a final recourse. Driving a delivery-wagon connoted helping to load and unload it, often a back-breaking task; the hours were long and irregular; he must be out in all weathers, cover unimaginable distances on any kind of roads, share or take alone the blame for mistakes, delays and damage, account for money; and all this at wages no higher than those current for the average private chauffeur. Even at a lower figure, the advantage was all with the latter; a comparatively easy job, in many instances board and lodging, always the possibility of tips and what appear in a more sophisticated vocabulary as perquisites; Luther called it the rake-off. He had had a sample of this kind of work, or something closely akin to it, driving for the officers at Fort William, and found it signally to his liking; it took him to pleasant places, theatres, clubs, private houses, seats of the mighty; the people themselves were pleasant, well-dressed, free-handed, in a word, swell. If not of them he was constantly with them in the agreeably formal intimacy necessitated by the position; a relish for it lingered on his palate, and—to continue the metaphor—rendered trucking a yet more nauseous dose. Ellie likewise was against the latter, though not wholly for the same reasons; she feared for his health. All in all, it seemed best to both of them, that he should secure a private chauffeurship; they had been going begging in war time, but by now the saturnine fates had conspired, apparently, to supply every place.

Yet there was a dearth of domestic service; the swell world filled column after column in the advertising section, crying out for cooks, for butlers, for housemaids—but nobody needed a first-class, all-around chauffeur and auto mechanic; it was disheartening.

The quality peculiar to the job he was after—namely, its swellness—provided him with an excuse for frequenting the neighbourhood of the resorts of swelldom when it turned out with all its equipage to entertain or be entertained—the fashionable hotels and restaurants just before or just after the theatre, churches during a wedding, even the ball-park and Lowrey's Beach on occasions when society took it into its head to play at being the proletariat. Amongst the concourse of waiting chauffeurs, he was almost certain to run across acquaintances, and there was always the chance that some of them might know of a job or put him in the way of getting one. Luther needed no more plausible theory to account for his diligence at this particular method of job-seeking; he scarcely realized, certainly did not confess to himself that the swell crowd itself attracted him far more powerfully than its problematical capacity for furnishing jobs. He would have liked to see it and be near it, had it been made up only of natty, careless, lavish men, of trained and brocaded women, strung with jewels. But the girls——! Those fluttering bevies, wrapped in softly seductive furs and velvets, those little silky heads filleted with silver leaves and ribbons and tiny roses and apples from Titania's garden, those gracious bodies, each one a slight, warm, supple armful in piquantly scanty and fragile draperies, the texture of mist, the hues of a dream——! The view of them wrought upon the young man's senses potently as wine, with a charm at once heady and languorous. He dimly per-

ceived that they were desirable mainly because unattainable; they were just girls, when all was said, but they moved in an orbit as remote as the stars. Sometimes he recognized the men with them, Lieutenant Ordway for one, and once another man with iron-grey hair but a more or less youthful face who, Luther was sure, was Captain Meigs. They did not see him, they did not take enough interest in outsiders of his degree to look, setting apart the fact that the entire order, chauffeurs, maids and the like assumed to them much the same aspect and out of costume were hardly distinguishable one from another. Luther suspected this, but it did not arouse any class antagonism within him; his was an essentially tolerant, easy-going, live-and-let-live spirit. All he asked was one of their highly-paid and not too onerous jobs; and at times he suffered from a violent curiosity—to give the feeling as handsome a name as possible—about those entrancing girls.

One evening as he was loitering at the entrance to the Dreamworld motion-picture house, he saw his late lieutenant again. The small half-pentagon of the vestibule was packed with Dreamworld patrons waiting their turn to see Annabelle Pickett and Ainslee Ford in *"Playthings Of An Hour,"* that high-flavoured drama over which there had been so much disagreement with the censors; it was understood that a compromise had finally been arrived at through the willingness of the producing firm to make a material alteration in the scenario. These accommodating gentlemen inserted a few yards of film showing the hero and heroine coming out of church; and that, with an extra sub-title, *"Darling, now that we are married——!"* flashed on the screen just before the boudoir and bedroom pictures, of course, rehabilitated the whole presentation, rendering it per-

fectly decent, wholesome and intellectually uplifting. It drew huge crowds of those who either wanted to be morally benefited, or, like Luther, had heard that it was still "pretty raw"; there were two young women in the cage, instead of one, both of them taking in and shoving out money at top speed, and the queue of purchasers extended half way down the block. Luther, flattened against the wall and fingering his own admission in his pocket, watched them absently; he could see automobiles worming up to the curb, one after another.

"Well, I wish you'd look at Fatty, May! He ought to buy two seats just for himself." some girl giggled into another's ear, alongside him and at the instant his wandering gaze lighted on young Ordway who must have just reached the cashiers' grating. Joe was feeling for his money with the effect, as usual, of difficulty in extracting it from a pocket somewhere in the middle of him, tightly squeezed between wads of flesh; one could see him puffing and getting pinker with the other buyers pressing at his back and the desk-girl waiting ostentatiously. Out came the bills at last with a jerk, and a man on the other side of Luther exclaimed in burlesque relief.

"Nobody won't ever get that guy's roll off of him. He can't hardly get it offa his own self!" he observed, catching Luther's eye; then added with a kind of jocular respect, "It's some roll, too!"

It was, and Mr. Ordway was buying a handful of tickets, as Luther noted; the fat young man swept all the change together, helter-skelter, in nervous haste, and precipitately bolted out of the line.

"He must have been buying for a crowd," one of the girls murmured. "But they oughtn't to have sent

*him* in; you have to be as flat as a fish to get around in a place like this."

"I guess it's his party," said her companion.

Luther, meanwhile, following with his eye the ex-lieutenant's broad round back in a noticeably well-cut and well-fitted Bond Street confection—Joe was particular about his clothes, as indeed he had every cause to be!—saw him join a knot of young people on the sidewalk, somewhat withdrawn from the crowd. There were some other men, two or three girls; one of these stood a little apart, studying the lurid scenic excerpts from *"Playthings Of An Hour"* tacked up on the billboards. Her figure looked straight and slender as a boy's in a short, narrow white skirt and a knitted silk coat, close-clinging, a slatey blue-green color with bands of strange black and orange and cream and gold-threaded needlework; she had a pair of the most beautiful legs in the world, slim, round and tapering; she glanced towards him casually. Luther edged briskly around the flank of the crowd.

He arrived at the opposite side just as a movement ran through the waiting ranks, signalling the opening of the doors; everybody pressed forward as the earlier audience began trickling, then pouring out; one was propelled along in the right direction almost without guidance and at a compulsory rate of speed, step by step, so that Luther, falling in line behind the Ordway party, and immediately beside the girl with the green sweater must perforce keep his position and progress with them, no faster, no slower. Some people had drifted in between her and the others; they all continued advancing in this order. She glanced at Luther casually again. She had to raise her eyes to do this, and they were extraordinary eyes, a shade nearly matching her

silk coat, soft and luminous, with long thick recurved lashes much darker than the bright hair that waved in such bewitching little tendrils around her delicate temples; she was an astoundingly, a bewilderingly pretty girl. Luther looked down at her; their eyes met. It dismayed him to see hers shift in panic-stricken hurry; he had a notion what the expression of his own had been, having experimented with it at previous encounters with girls. Heretofore this same result had always been most gratifying; but now he warned himself anxiously that there was a difference between those other girls and this one. He did not know what she might think, what she might do if he were to—to—to start something; and just what Mr. Nichols meant by that phrase, let some other gentleman of his years and tastes explain!

At the moment she did nothing; they had penetrated to the auditorium, the crowd opened out, her friends were looking back and beckoning. Luther could still trail behind and next to her without conspicuously dogging her, he thought; what more natural than to tramp along, looking for a place to sit, but too polite to thrust in ahead of a lady? In point of fact, he managed so well as to be still at her heels when she caught up with her party; they threaded the rows of seats and got themselves well placed in the middle of the house, and boxes of candy began to circulate, and there was a deal of the talk and laughter and abstruse allusion that mean so much in close youthful circles such as theirs, so little to outsiders; and then the theatre was darkened, the preliminary announcements sprang out on the screen; there was silence. And all this while Luther was sitting at the end of the row, next to the green-eyed, green-coated nymph; he was in a thrilling uncer-

tainty as to whether she herself had taken part in the maneuvre that arranged them thus, or not.

The play began. It proved to be sufficiently "raw" for the audience to find it difficult constantly to keep in mind that reassuring disclosure about the principals being married; there were passages that held even Luther's attention by stimulating hints and suggestions. After one such, he ventured a look at the girl, a slight movement. But an immobile profile was all he could make out in the dark; she was sitting back, in a straight attitude with her arms laid along the arms of the seat. There was not an inch between their shoulders; Luther slanted his to touch; he was ready to jerk away with a muffled "Beg pardon" in case she—— She sat motionless! He tremulously advanced a hand. Her wrist was very small, the pulse beating in it set every vein in the young man's body astir wildly; her hand fitted under the palm of his big one, cool, soft and inert, yet distributing fire through him like a live coal.

What happened thenceforward to Annabelle and Ainslee, Luther did not know. Playthings of an hour, forsooth! He was having his own hour, and it was all too brief; but—he said to himself—while it lasted, it beat getting drunk hollow! It may be added that it beat every previous essay of his in the same line hollow; the touch of mystery removed it from the plane of ordinary adventures in gallantry to the higher one of romance. She never gave a sign of being aware of him during the whole time, and yet she let him——! Never a sign, that is, unless he excepted one little, light sigh, a mere broken breath, barely audible, though it somehow moved him ecstatically. On taking thought afterwards, it was obvious that this was of no real significance; it might have been a half-checked yawn. But

Luther put that unpoetic construction from him with abhorrence; he chose to think that she had sighed, and took a shamed delight in the belief that he knew why. He also chose to think that these favors were of no haphazard bestowal; the idea that any man but himself would have won them in the same circumstances he found as abhorrent as the other, worse—it was unbearable, torturing. No, she had looked at him, marked him, singled him out; it was deliberate and intentional.

He had to allow himself to become separated from her and her party, in the emerging crowd with the lights coming on full force—or did she herself contribute adroitly to the rearrangement, as perhaps before? With the open air and a certain clearing of the brain, a certain cooling of the blood, there descended on him a leaden sense of finality. It was all over; he would never see her again; and as to sitting by her, touching her, caressing her, there was not a chance in a thousand. Any girl, he told himself desolately, any society girl that belonged to Ordway's crowd, that swell North Hill crowd—what was the use? They had reached the curb, and the girls were aligned along it while young Ordway and the other men went off probably in quest of their machine. Luther strayed near, irresolute, disconsolate—and the green silk coat turned around with a lithe and leisurely motion, scanned the people, looked at him full and directly; she smiled. The next instant, Ordway came up with the car; the clan all piled in with squeals and commotion. And everything was all over sure enough, while Luther still stood stunned, elated, triumphant. One thing was established now, at least; he was right about one thing; it was no more of a come-by-chance experience with her than with himself. She knew perfectly what she was doing,

and—*meant* it, she *meant* every minute of that rapturous hour. All the easy amours, the easy victories of his life were tasteless and shabby by comparison; his head was in the clouds.

He returned to earth, however, with returning sober second thoughts, and the consciousness of being addressed by name. "Lo, Nick!" someone was saying; and again persistently, though with rising doubt! "Lo! It *is* Nichols, ain't it?"

"Oh! Why! *Hello!*" said Luther, rousing himself to grasp the other's hand; looking upon him, he recognized an ex-associate of Schulte's; a man whom they called Barney, though whether this was his first or last name Luther did not know, or could not remember. He pumped the hand up and down, with perfunctory words. How was Barney? And what did he know, anyhow?

Barney, it appeared, was fine. Oh, sure; yes, sure; he'd been in the army like everybody else, but he was out now, and if they ever wanted him again, they'd have to come after him with a block and tackle! He was out for himself—independent, you know—he had his own machine, it was a Cadillac he got dirt cheap off of a fellow that had gone broke, a dandy car, there it was, right over there. Some car, uh? Why, he drove anybody, drove all over; it kept you humping, but you were your own boss, and there was good money in it. And say, listen, he wanted to ask Luther something——

"Sure! Where do I go to get a drink?" Luther queried sardonically. "The answer's easy, buddy. I don't go and I don't get it! I haven't got the price."

"Naw, I don't mean *that!*" said Barney, grinning. "Not but what it's somepin to know, too," he interlined liberally. "Naw, what I mean is somebody told

me you was looking out for somepin. Is that so? Because if it is, I know of somepin."

Luther stared an instant incredulously. The thought shot through his mind that this was too much for one day; first the little jane in green, and now a job! Things were coming his way too fast; it wasn't in nature. "You got me right. I ain't got any job, and I'd like to have one. On'y what is this?" he asked cautiously, recovering. "Driving?"

"Yeah, straight driving. And say, it oughta be some job, too. It's this here old lady Grace, Mrs. Andrew J. Grace, I think her whole name is. Anyway, she's got pretty near all the money there is, and lives out here on the North Hill—one of that swell crowd, you know——"

Yes, decidedly things were coming Luther's way at last!

## IV

Luther struck while the iron was hot; that is to say, he took leave of his new-old friend in a haste which the latter could well understand, and rushed off to the nearest telephone pay station to call up the Grace house, and inquire if the position were still open. His luck, the luck of this amazing day, held! No one had been engaged as yet, Mrs. Grace was at home, and would see him at once if he could come out, this was the butler answering, and there followed some directions about finding the place.

He ran out and caught the first hill-ward bound car in a superstitiously exalted and confident mood, certain of the job; nothing could go wrong for him today. Once he thought of Ellie with a twinge of compunction; he might have called her up and told her. Time enough for that, though, when they both got home; she was very busy with the store and her everlasting Créme Janice anyhow. He let her slip from his mind, as he fell to speculating about the green-coated girl. It was more than likely that this Grace job, if he landed it—and of course he was going to land it!—would put him in the way of seeing her again, and finding out who she was. Or—and this other speculation made him smile—suppose he never saw her and never found out, what of it? Those society girls—— There were plenty more of them on the North Hill; and for all he knew, they might everyone be like Miss Green-Eyes, give them the chance—

and give *him* the chance. Yet somehow he preferred to think that this was not the case; this one must be as different from the rest as she was superior to them in looks. In Luther's own language, she laid over the whole bunch; of all the girls he had seen, not one could hold a candle to her! And it must be allowed that Mr. Nichols had been a close and observant student.

He had a good sense of locality, cultivated no doubt by the experiences incidental to his trade, and found the way without difficulty and without asking questions; indeed he remembered the Country Club and two or three of the best-known great houses here and there from the days of his army driving. Lieutenant Ordway lived somewhere hereabouts; Luther wished that he had marked the place more carefully when it was pointed out to him. He went on in a curious state of physical satisfaction; it seemed to him that the very air of the North Hill breathed wealth and ease and spacious living; this was the life, he said to himself complacently, and he presently beheld the park and monumental chimnies of the Grace house with an approval already almost proprietary. Also he wondered if there were any Grace young people—girls? Some lowlier tile roofs he divined to be those of the garage and greenhouses, and fetching a compass around them, gained the rear entrance. A maid at whom he looked only long enough to notice that she had a tolerable figure in her uniform and was perceptibly impressed by his own appearance—but what was a maid's favor after those green eyes?—let him in, upon hearing his errand. The butler came; there were more maids, there were pantries, halls, stairways; the house seemed as big as any down-town hotel. In the middle of it, the old lady Grace abode in a sunny glassed and tiled apartment like something costly pre-

served in a case. Luther got an impression of flowers and cushions and hothouse fragrances; of a frieze of Pompeian figures marching on red marble backgrounds; of tall windows enclosing the serene landscape; and set where the sunlight struck it, a three-hoofed bronze stand with a globe of water wherein goldfish glanced eerily. A small dog yapped at his feet; there was another maid; and a little, feeble old woman motioned him forward with her veined, unstable, bediamonded hand.

"Ah, you've been in the Service?" she said, surveying the uniform approvingly. Mrs. Andrew J. Grace was eighty years old; she was long past caring for anything but the creature comforts, and she had been waited upon by dozens of efficient and well-turned-out servants, men and women, all her life; nevertheless, with her as with others less seasoned, Luther's "look" undoubtedly did the business! He knew that he was hired from the first moment that she saw him. She asked some questions: Did he know the city well? Was he a good mechanic? Could he drive any make of machine? Luther, who privately considered himself the best mechanic that ever heid a wrench, and furthermore was of the opinion that he could make rings around any other chauffeur driving, still had the instinct to answer modestly. Even fortified with the information that she had all the money there is, he was not prepared for the breath-taking salary she mentioned—in the most matter-of-course way; but, spite of his pleasurable surprise, he kept an impassive countenance as he signified that it would be satisfactory. In this sphere, as erstwhile at Schulte's, no one should ever get the laugh—or anything else!—on Luther Nichols. And *now* what would Emil—to whom, by the way, he had referred her—*now* what would he have to say about

chauffeurs' wages? Maybe this would learn him, Luther thought, vindicated and jubilant. Mrs. Grace was speaking again.

"Are you married?"

Consternation invaded him; why did she want to know? He could see himself in this environment, but not Ellie. It is something to his credit that he told the truth. "Yes, ma'am."

The old lady smiled benevolently. "Any family?"

"Just her and me," said Luther uneasily, apprehensive of he knew not what. But Mrs. Grace only smiled again at what seemed to her a natural and becoming embarrassment; and perhaps the regard she bent on him was unconsciously a little wistful. Once upon a time, she had a son, just such another straight-limbed young fellow as this, she thought; he had been dead these thirty years.

"There's a very nice little apartment on the second floor of my garage, with a bath and everything for housekeeping," she said. "I'll have it put in order for you. The last man was single."

"Well, my—my wife, she works, too——" stammered Luther. "She—I don't know——" The trouble was that he did know only too well! Never, never in this world would Ellie abandon her Créme, her hats, her Federmann to keep house in a nice little apartment on the second floor of Mrs. Grace's garage; in the depths of him somewhere there lurked a fervent thankfulness that such was the case. He did not want her there; she wouldn't know how to behave, he thought in a kind of irritation, feeling blindly and inarticulately that it would be as impossible to make her understand Mrs. Grace and her household as it would be to make them understand her. But their calculations, or at least

Ellie's calculations had not visualized the possibility of their being obliged to live separately; those half-formed apprehensions of Luther's solidified into a very definite forecast of her objections; the only argument likely to get a hearing from her was couched in the terms of that whacking salary—but it was a strong argument. Money talks! "She's—she's out all day same as me—she's got something she does——"

Old Mrs. Grace looked at him a little wonderingly. Young people were very different now from what they were in her day, she was reflecting. *Then,* when a man married, it was taken for granted that he would support his wife and that all she wanted was to stay at home and be supported. "With this generation apparently it's everybody for himself and devil take the hindmost, as Andrew used to say! But perhaps that is the way it always has been in this boy's class," she reminded herself. "And, at any rate, it's their affair, not mine." She waved her hand. "You have your days off, of course," she said aloud. "The married men always make—er—some arrangement. Edwards has a house in the village——" By which she meant the settlement through which the Adams Road car wound on its way to the North Hill. Officially "the village" had no name and no corporate existence; *de facto,* it was Murphyville, and known throughout the entire community. "I'm sure it's a nice place to live and quite convenient for going to work down-town or on the Hill," said the old lady graciously.

And she touched the bell, and Edwards, who turned out to be the butler, came again and convoyed Luther away. He was agreeably chatty, offered a solution of the home-making problem (there were plenty of furnished rooms for light housekeeping in Murphyville,

according to Edwards), imparted some additional information about the chauffeur's equipment which, in common with that of all the other domestics, he said, was supplied by the best houses in New York—"Just feel of the sleeve of this here day-coat I got on, just feel of it! Maybe that ain't first-class worsted goods, what!"—and wound up by presenting the new man to a whole kitchenfull of backstairs and below-the-salt gentry. Luther, actually as strange in this sort of gathering as a fish out of water, nevertheless carried it off hardily; once more the wariness and reticence cultivated in garage days stood him in good stead. Even the smart, good-looking French woman of uncertain age who was Mrs. Grace's maid and did her fine sewing, pronounced him *trés bien mis.* "Married—ah, *oui!* But not *too* married!" she said with an incomparable shrug. Accompanied by an under-gardener or some such functionary, he went down and took a survey of the garage and cars, outwardly lofty, marvelling within. The old girl surely did have it—scads of it, he said to himself; and this certainly was his lucky day.

All the way home the self-congratulations kept up, when he was not elaborating the persuasions he would employ upon Ellie. It would suit him thoroughly to live out there, going home for a visit at stated intervals; but if she would not agree to that, there was the alternative course of Murphyville and light housekeeping. Some "arrangement" would be possible, anyhow; in reason, Ellie would never insist on his letting slip such a chance. It was in a very prideful, confident and care-free mood that he marched, whistling, up the Amelia Street steps, and thrust his key into the lock. Before he could turn it, Ellie herself came; it sounded as if she were almost running. He had not supposed that she would be at

home yet, and was a little disconcerted to find that the moment of explanation and exposition was so near. Somehow he was not so well prepared as he had thought; he heard the hurrying footsteps with a sudden, odd foreboding.

Sure enough, her face as she opened the door was charged with excitement, suspense, perturbation. "Loot! For the gracious sakes! I been waiting and waiting——!" she began at once in a lowered, secretive voice, clutching him and fairly dragging him into the house, with furtive glances up street and down. "Seemed like you'd never come!"

"Why, what's matter?"

"Loot, Roy's here! He's come back! He's here!"

Luther gazed around. "Here? Where?" He made a step towards the sitting-room, but Ellie still held him.

"I don't mean *here!*" she said in a more natural manner, with some impatience. "I just mean he's back. He ain't here in the house right now. He's been, but he went out again. He went to see that there Mr. Graddy out to the packing-house. You know? Where he useta work. But he's coming here again, Luther, he's coming to see you." She let go of him with the last words, beginning to laugh nervously. "I don't know what made me whisper that way. It kinda upset me, seeing him and—everything, I guess."

"The way you talked, I thought he was here," said Luther, still blankly gazing.

"Well, he will be any minute, I wouldn't wonder. I was so scared you might run inta him. You might, you know—it wouldn't have been anything outa the way. I been waiting and *waiting* so's to catch you, and tell you before you'd saw him. I was so scared——"

"Scared what for? What you scared of?"

"Nothing—I don't know—on'y—why, I just *had* to see you first, before he did, Loot. Loot, I told him we'd heard he got killed. He knew we was married a' ready. Somebody from here told him—they'd had a letter, or something—I don't know how it was exackly, but anyhow they told him, so he knew about us. So I just told him we heard he'd got killed," Ellie repeated. "Then I got scared maybe you'd see him before I had a chance to tell you. 'S all right, now, though. Gee, I'm glad you come!"

She spoke with relief, obviously expecting a corresponding relief, and complete understanding from him. But Luther groped in darkness, his mind catching at and fumbling with and relinquishing a succession of fragmentary ideas; that Roy was here was the only fact of which he was sure; he could make nothing of all this urgency and strategy. "We'd heard he'd got——? Why, we *didn't!* We never heard nothing like that! What'd you tell Roy that for? What made you?"

Ellie looked at him in mingled anxiety and vexation; the situation was perfectly plain from the feminine point of view. "Why, my goodness, Loot, I had to tell him something! I didn't want him feeling bad, and anyhow, I didn't know how he'd take it—our being married, you know. I didn't know what he'd do!"

"He wouldn'ta done nothing," Luther said, out of an abyss of perplexity. "Roy wouldn'ta done nothing, Why, what'd you think? There ain't nothing to *do!*"

"Well, I didn't know. He mighta got mad, or something."

"Who get mad? Roy? Why, no, he wouldn't. It wouldn't do no good, and anyways he—he—we're *friends,* you know. We always been *friends*——" Luther halted, struck with a conviction of her inability to understand;

somehow, it appalled him. "Roy's my *friend,*" he helplessly reiterated.

"Well, anyhow, that's what I told him. Then I got scared I wouldn't get hold of you in time, so you'd know to say the same thing," Ellie said simply.

Luther stared at her as if he had never seen her before; he felt as if he were in the presence of some stranger, more than probably an enemy. He saw himself ensnared in her flimsy plot, bound to support this cheap subterfuge that did no good, that exonerated neither one of them. All this time, it had never once occurred to him that the thing they had done could be glossed over; he had only turned aside in shame and dismay from the prospect of having to stand up to it, to face Roy with it. But the moment, he knew, was ineluctable; it had come; he asked no reprieve, only to have it done and over with! Ellie defeated his honor; and he dimly perceived resentment to be impotent, to be even brutal. "I don't guess anything we could tell him'd make much difference," he said, at last, heavily. "On'y he can easy find out that *that* ain't so, Ellie. They always put th' names in th' papers when they was killed or missing or whatever. I don't know how you expect Roy to b'lieve that. Anybody can tell him."

"Yeh, but he'd b'lieve you or me. He'd always b'lieve anything *we* told him. You know how Roy is," said Ellie comfortably. Luther had an instant of stark horror; the ease of betraying Roy was to him another poignant humiliation, but to Ellie—! He gave up, concluding in desperate philosophy that that was how women were. It was monstrous, but what were you going to do about it?

All the savor had gone out of his luck; he told Eillie, feeling momentarily that he did not care how she re-

ceived the news, or what decision she would come to regarding their way of life hereafter. But lo, she became at once the woman of business, unhampered by sentiment, shrewd, practical, upright!

"Naw, Murphyville won't do for *me,* Loot," she announced with regretful firmness. "It sounds fine, but it wouldn't do. There's all that car-fare in and out every day. Here I can always walk if I feel like saving it, or if the cars is on the blink. Out there I'd have to hop out about midnight to get dressed and breakfast and an early start; and at that you don't see me standing round on no corner waiting for the Adams Road car winter mornings when it ain't hardly daylight yet, and zero weather! Anyways I ain't any housekeeper, and I wouldn't have the time there no more'n I do here. Naw, the best for me is to stay right here and live with Maw and go to the store every day like I was single still. But I don't see what's to hinder your living here, too, same like you always done before when you was driving. It's different with a man about going to his work. They can always get round a whole lot easier than a woman can."

Luther admitted this, but raised another point. "'S all right if th' old lady don't keep me late nights. Th' house is easy a mile from th' Road. I'd have to leg it all th' way back, and them old owl-cars don't run but once an hour. If you miss th' one o'clock you gotta wait till two, that's all. Still, there's a garodge right at th' corner where I guess they'll leave me go in and lay on a bench——"

But—as possibly he may have foreseen—this did not fall in with Ellie's views at all. She took alarm. The North Hill was awfully *country* and lonely; there were too many of these hold-up men that would just as lief knock you over the head as eat their dinner; they kept a

line on everybody that would likely have money on him; she wouldn't be a bit surprised if they even found out what day was pay-day for Luther, and laid for him, or spotted him when he went to cash a cheque at the bank. She wouldn't care how much they took if they just didn't do nothing to him; but the trouble was if he didn't have nothing on him when they went through him, they'd likely as not beat him up just out of spite, they were that mean and ugly. Naw, the only way to do, Ellie guessed with a sigh, was for Luther to stay out there at the Grace place, and come in town on his time off; maybe they'd let him have two nights a week; that wasn't much. He could *ask* anyhow; no harm *asking*.

"Yeh, I can do that," Luther assented pliantly. "Not right at first, though. Seems if I'd better wait and see how I suit 'em. Don't wanta get brash, you know, and ack like I thought they couldn't do without me."

This was reasonable; it was even sagacious; and Ellie could not but agree, fighting down the distrust that beset her against her will. She suspected wretchedly that he had no intention of asking for those two nights at home, that even if he should not be allowed one night, it would not trouble him greatly; perhaps she was not the first woman who has felt that were her husband to come home only to beat her, she would be better satisfied than to see him contented to stay away. At heart she would have liked Luther to be jealous, and at heart she knew that he was not in the least jealous. Alas, it was the other way around! She coveted him with every fibre; she had him; she was miserable. Roy was avenged already, had he known it.

The honest fellow was not thinking of revenge; had the chance been offered him, he would have put it from him with repugnance. When the two men met, it was

without ill-feeling—and somehow, that did not altogether please Ellie, either! They shook hands, both of them more moved, perhaps, than they would have cared to own. Roy looked noticeably older; his big figure was gaunt, there was a kind of weary wonder stamped on the face under the over-seas cap, a line between his blue eyes that were as patient as ever, but much more watchful. He was in good shape physically, however, he assured Luther upon the latter's words of concern, never better; the rigors of the life seemed to agree with him, and in a year's campaigning, practically at the front the entire time, he had never got a scratch.

"I guess it was pretty hot, times, too?" Luther hinted.

He nodded gravely. "Yes. Pretty hot."

"Was you ever *'over th' top,'* like they used to call it, Roy?"

"You mean when we clumb outa th' trench? Yeh. Three-four times——" Roy paused, knitting his brows in his familiar fashion when making an effort of mind or memory. "Mebbe more. I don't just remember."

"Kinda tough, I guess."

"Yeh."

"Do you guess you got any of 'em? Th' Germans, I mean. When you'd shoot?"

"I guess I did. See here?" said Roy, drawing the other's attention by a movement to the little slip of metal pinned on the breast of his khaki blouse; it bore the word *Sharpshooter*. Luther examined it with admiration and envy, and a real pride in his friend.

"Good work, Roy! Say, that's fine! When'd you get it?"

"Well, they gimme it here when we was down at Montgomery for high score on th' rifle-range," Roy explained carefully. "I always useta could shoot pretty

good when we was boys out to Deercreek, remember? Then, when we got over there, I—I just kep' on. They didn't give you nothing for it, over there. You had t' shoot as good as you could, anyways. One of them Batchygloopo boys, I guess you reck'leck him, Tony, th' big one, he was over, on'y he wasn't at th' same places where I was at, but I ran acrost him on leave one time—Tony got th' War Cross. I guess mebbe you heerd."

"Yeh, it was in th' paper. I don't know whether he's back yet. I ain't seen him."

There was a silence, then Roy said: "It was him told me about you n' Ellie. Some of his folks wrote it to him in a letter."

"Roy, I—I don't know how it come. I s'pose mebbe it was because we was going to'gether all th' time—Roy, I didn't go to do you that way—I——"

"I know," said the other man, in his slow and laborious way. "After I heerd I set 'n' kinda studied it out, Loot. I guess people can't help theirselves 'bout things like that. I anyhow want Ellie for t' have everything th' way she wants, an' if she likes you best, that's all right. An' I want you should have her, if that's what *you* want. I ain't faultin' either one of you. It's just like I say, them things can't be helped, I don't b'lieve. You ain't got any say-so 'bout who you like; you just like 'em. 'S all right with me, Luther. 'F you'd told me any time, I'd 'a' said it was all right."

"I knew you'd say that, Roy. But I feel like I ain't done you right, just th' same. I been feeling that way right straight along.'

"There ain't nothing t' feel bad about. Things like that just gotta *be,* I guess," said Roy.

They sat in a communicative silence for another while, then he spoke again. "Ellie, she told me you heerd I

was killed over there, and I let on like I b'lieved her. But I expeck she was just sayin' it."

"Sure! She was just talkin'."

There had been no difficulty about Roy's job, it appeared; Mr. Graddy welcomed him back not merely with kind words, but at an appreciable increase of wages. He returned without question to the old quarters, the old ways at Mrs. Siefert's; he had a doggish faithfulness to habit. In an astonishingly short space of time all three of them found themselves accustomed to the readjustment of their relations; it was as if Luther and Ellie had always been married, or as if their marriage had been the expectation from the beginning. Never was there a more peaceable or prosaic denouement to the triangular problem commonly accredited with such sensational possibilities! The fact was that every member of this particular triangle was preoccupied with the intrinsically undramatic business of making a living, and had no time for the purple flourish, even if disposed towards it. Ellie's hands were full with her shop; between the hats, the *Janice* preparations, the bead bags, the costume jewellery and all the rest of it, business sometimes limped and sometimes galloped, but at any rate kept going. She spared no personal effort, getting up early and slaving the livelong day with her one young girl assistant, cleaning and preening the place, waiting for and on customers, enduring agonies of anxiety and disappointment with a smiling, civil, persuasive exterior. She used to bring the books home at night, and spend hours fagging over them, setting off dreadfully certain expenses against dreadfully uncertain returns, desperately divided in mind between inserting another advertisement in the theatre programmes, or ordering another consignment of ivory pyraline toilet-table furnishings. It was one of life's iron-

ical compensations that these cares balanced off in some measure that other care, her husband.

And, for that matter, Luther on his side was leading as exemplary a life; it would have been difficult to lead any other kind in a household so well regulated as that of Mrs. Grace. Besides, although the routine of his day was anything but interesting, it kept him busy. There was a machine for the use of the servants, a natty little depot-wagon to carry luggage to and fro or go upon marketing errands, a touring-car for country and warm weather driving, a majestic limousine the first Rolls-Royce Luther had ever seen in which the old lady went to church, to Symphony concerts, to the score of charitable institutions and educational and aesthetic associations on whose boards she took a forward and useful part. After six months of it, Luther was ready to swear that he had carted tons of jellies, fruits, flowers, magazines, clothes and medicines to every hospital and Home in the city, not to mention private "cases"; he had conveyed from pillar to post whole platoons of clergymen, orphans, cripples, nurses, social workers, art-students, and other beneficiaries of Mrs. Grace's thoughtfulness; he had even dressed Christmas-trees under her direction, and helped nail up boxes for Eskimo and Hottentot Sunday-Schools. Once in a while the old lady went to a magnificent dinner, or gave one, whereat every male guest looked like a bank director or justice of the Supreme Bench, and was accompanied by a portly double about his own age in skirts and sables and a tiara, but apart from these there were scarcely any purely social activities. *This is the life!* Not a soul under fifty ever came near the house or was to be seen where Mrs. Grace herself visited. Luther, however, made some acquaintance among the chauffeurs, and he speedily learned the

geography of the Hill with relation to the old lady's circle, so that she seldom needed to direct him.

". . . Most convenient thing on earth," she wrote to her granddaughter. All I have to say is: 'Nichols, to Mrs. Thatcher's—to Mrs. Lawson Rudd's,' or wherever it may happen to be. 'Yes, madame'—and he goes straight there without any more bother talking through the tube and telling him which gate it is, or anything. He was quite new to private driving, and I suspect had never lived in just this sort of way before, but he has improved immensely. He is married, which I thought a strong argument for taking him, the married ones are always so much more steady. I think they must be a very nice, thrifty young couple, for Amélie tells me his wife is a milliner and has a little shop down town, and that it has a very good "tone"; besides hats she sells a perfectly wonderful massage cream. Amélie tried to coax me into buying some. I have never been able to convince her that at my time of life one isn't interested in massage creams. However, I happened to mention it to Mrs. Meigs the other day at luncheon, when *as usual* everybody got to talking about servants, and she says she has been to the place and the cream is really good, and comes in little blue jars that are works of art! . . . Alice Ordway was here not long ago. She was perfectly delighted to hear that you were coming and told me to be sure and save a day for her to have you, she is wild to show you the new house. Their little girl has grown up into the loveliest thing you ever saw; she had her coming-out party last winter. I've seen her only once or twice, naturally; but Alice will be only too proud and happy to parade her before an old friend like you. My only fear is that she and all the rest of them will wear you to a thread with their hospitalities; they've planned something

for every day, almost every hour. . . . You'll find Nichols most useful . . ."

The lady to whom this gossippy and rambling letter was addressed—Mrs. Marshall Cook, née Grace, of New York and Long Island—arrived for her visit, not long thereafter; and the useful Nichols was well enough pleased to fetch and carry for her and take her from place to place. His work was trebled, but in a way very much more to his taste. Mrs. Cook was not young—he thought she must be about forty, he told Ellie to allay her vigilant curiosity—but she seemed almost juvenile in comparison with Mrs. Grace's estimable contemporaries of whom Luther had had enough and to spare. There was a cessation of those benevolent and philanthropic activities with which, to tell the truth, he was beginning to be profoundly bored; no more Fresh-Air-Farm picnics for tenement-house children, no more elderly spinsters to be taken to the deaconness' meeting at the parish house. Mrs. Cook went to luncheons, she went to dinners, she went to the theatre; she kept the limousine on the road morning, noon and night, but she filled it with pretty, brilliantly dressed, expensive ladies like herself, with men who tipped him royally, with bouquets of girls now and then. There was a kind of atmosphere of diamonds and ermine and champagne. You might read about all of it in the "Society Jottings" columns; Ellie did read in the intervals of figuring up those other columns, with what jealous disquiet, who can guess? She tried to make herself believe that it was because of that big dance at the Country Club that Luther had not called up Tuesday morning; he must have been worn out and he had to have his sleep after waiting around all night. It was quite true, as he told her later, only omitting to mention that he had put in the time at poker with half a

dozen other chauffeurs, and some flasks that were going the rounds. As to his not coming home Saturday evening, didn't he have to drive Mrs. Cook to the Ordways' and didn't they sit at dinner and at auction afterwards until past midnight?

This spurt of gayety lasted three weeks or so; then Mrs. Cook went back to New York and Long Island with her maid and her Pekinese and her pearl collar and her wardrobe from Callot and Doucet; and everything settled into the humdrum rut again. But alas for Mrs. Grace! Nichols, the useful, the immensely improved Nichols gave notice. It transpired later that he went to drive for Mr. Joseph Ordway.

# V

By the date of his entry into the Ordway service, Mr. Nichols in his own opinion was pretty well up in matters pertaining to the worldly standing of any member of the employers' class with whom he might come in contact. Association with the swell North Hill trade was an instructive experience, taken with the years of apprenticeship that had let up to it. Luther looked back with a mingling of shame and amusement upon that green youth who was so ignorantly honest as to return Jack Dalton's bribe, who had seen so little that he thought Emil Schulte a great man. Nowadays he never would let Dalton get by for only twenty-five dollars, supposing he would consider driving for him at all, Luther told himself with contempt, and he patronized Schulte kindly whenever they met, which was seldom; after all, Emil was a good fellow, and had given him his first chance, and deserved credit, too, for having made so much out of himself. But in the world where Luther now moved, any one of the men could buy and sell Emil ten times over, and as for the women——! The poor old garage-and-auto-livery sport had never seen, much less spoken to, their kind in his whole life.

Judged by his altered, elevated and exacting standards, the Ordway establishment did not rank among the most desirable for a really classy chauffeur, except—ahem!—in one particular. At half a glance Luther could see that it was not adjusted upon any such munificent scale as he had grown accustomed to with Mrs. Grace;

old man Ordway, he opined tolerantly, might have cleaned up a half million or so in the oil deal or whatever it was, but he did not have all the money there is, by any means. Instead of a dozen servants about the house, there were only four or five, and the grounds were manned with a scantiness that matched. The chauffeur had to accommodate himself to the comparative simplicity of a single room and bath; he found a handsome little brougham intended most probably for the use of the ladies of the family, a comfortable open car not the latest model, a new runabout. Luther looked over the lot rather superciliously; anyone a witness to his bearing on this occasion would have been dumbfounded at the sumptuous details that figured in his report to Ellie later. If talk could have done it he would have persuaded her and himself too that this transfer of allegiance to the Ordways was a great step upward; he enlarged fluently upon its advantages—the same pay but much lighter work—young Mr. Ordway and his sister really did almost all the driving—he would have ever so much more time at home, etc., etc. He believed every word of it before he got through; as for Ellie, his oath sworn on a stack of Bibles would not have availed against her perennial uneasiness. She did not distrust Luther—oh, no! The trouble was that there were girls everywhere lying in wait for him; it was the girls who were to blame, of course; men are so simple, so easily fooled—especially dark-eyed, romantic looking young chauffeurs who, left to themselves, would never think of any woman but their wives.

"What's the help like? You said there wasn't so many of 'em as that old lady Grace's got. What're they like?" she demanded keenly.

"Well, I ain't hardly seen any of 'em yet. Th' lady

that does th' cooking's kinda fat. She c'n cook pretty good," said Luther judicially. "They ain't any French one like at Mrs. Grace. Them Ordway ladies must make out t' do their own hair."

"What's that Miss Ordway like? I've heard some of 'em that come in the store saying she was pretty but awful wild—only that was just a knock, I guess."

"Yeh, they gotta get in a knock somehow, if they can't one way, they'll do it another," Luther said somewhat too heatedly, as he was aware the next instant. "Why, she's —she's all right," he went on with greater caution. "About like th' rest of that North Hill bunch. I mean. They all look alike to *me*, y' know——" (*Oh*, Luther!) "But say, listen, Ellie, what d'you think? I seen one of your Janeese jars, an empty one, throwed out in Ordway's ash-can! What d'you know about that, huh? They must be usin' it."

Cornered, Luther would have contended that, as a simple matter of self-defence, he was forever having to divert his wife by some petty trick of which the above is a sample, from this subject of girls; it made no difference where or how he was employed, or who the girls were, or even how much he earned, her jealous curiosity was insatiable. At times he worked himself into the fine mood of a martyr over it; she would not allow that he had a grain of self-control or common sense; he was fairly driven to devices he despised, even to lying outright, for the sake of peace and comfort; a man might as well be unfaithful as be constantly suspected, all but accused of it!

Life at the Ordways went on in the same general style—if we overlook those minor differences on the side of expense—as at Mrs. Grace's or elsewhere on the Hill, so that Luther adjusted himself to the change readily.

He would have been able to adjust himself in any household sufficiently stylish to meet with his approval, having advanced to the point of sophistication where he knew his place perfectly; that is, he knew perfectly how to be a stylish chauffeur. Mrs. Ordway herself said that she had never seen better manners in a servant. He brought the car around in the mornings for the ladies to go shopping; brought it around in the afternoons for teas, matinées and visits, brought it around in the evenings for dinners and dances; he went after the two Josephs at the office or on the links; he was always the same, quick and skilful at the wheel, impeccably clean, deft, silent, distinguished, an ideal piece of domestic machinery. Only now and then, when he came up to the morning-room for orders, Mrs. Ordway experienced an evanescent discomfort under his hardy black eyes, which no piece of machinery would have aroused; it affected her so that she impulsively drew her lacy négligée up around her neck and shoulders, which were very white and shapely and tempting still. The morning-room was a warm, nest-like place with an atmosphere essentially feminine; there was always some disorder, scarfs, handkerchiefs, silk stockings and chiffon trifles even more alluringly intimate strewn about. After the young man had gone, Mrs. Joseph chided herself in a little temper; so silly! At her age! But Nichols looked—he looked—she was sure he meant no impudence—still, he looked.

Nichols, in the meanwhile, was unconscious of having looked in any specific way, save with the appreciation which he had an idea never seriously offended any woman yet; he was more or less inured to the spectacle of not-too-heavily clad ladies in silky boudoirs, having attended on them in the course of his duties, before this. Like other features of the life it gave him a subtle physi-

cal satisfaction merely to find himself part and parcel of this luxury. Besides Miss Ordway must spend some of her time in this retreat, in just such revealing draperies, on that same satin-pillowed lounge; hers might be the stockings and those other closely caressing garments. That so far she had never been there at the moment of his summons, was a disappointment he bore philosophically. There would be small gratification in seeing her with her mother at hand, anyhow; a chance at her alone was what Luther craved.

Apparently, that was precisely what he was not going to get; for weeks that seemed an age, he saw her only at a distance. except when they encountered conventionally in the performance of his chauffeur's duties. He held open the door of the car, handed in her wraps, golf-sticks or what-not, stood at attention to receive her orders, mutely obeyed them; or he merely ran the car up to the entrance, and left it for her, or waited there to take it over when she was due at home again. All the while he dwelt in uncertainty as to whether she recognized him or not; sometimes he assured himself naively enough that it was impossible she should have forgotten him; no girl that had looked at him that long in that way, Luther would think, glancing at the mirror, no girl that had shared that hour in the theatre, *could* forget him. But then, why not give him some sign? To be sure, he could not form an idea of what sort of sign she could give, but he said to himself vaguely that girls *knew,* they always could think of something, some trick. Maybe she was afraid of him, maybe she did not trust him; or maybe, horrid conjecture, the incident was only one of many such in Miss Ordway's career, too everyday to be of any importance! Luther's intuitions, however, pointed comfortingly to the contrary; not for nothing had he passed

the last year or so on the North Hill. Society functioned on several levels, but the same gossip fermented throughout the entire mass from top to bottom, stable to drawing-room, and by now Luther himself could wag as sprightly a tongue in defamation or scandalous report as any dowager. If Miss Juliet Ordway had been "that kind," as he phrased it, he would have heard long before this; there would have been stories. No, emphatically she was not that kind. But then, why——? The only theory he refused desperately to consider was that she meant everything to end here, now, at once. Otherwise, all his queries, all his arguments kept him still climbing the idle stair.

The garage at the Ordways was a picturesque cottage in the English taste to match the house, its steep-pitched roof simulating thatch, with a quaint little bird-house perched on the ridge-pole; the location, having been chosen with an eye solely to the picturesque also, was not of the most suitable, in a hollow whence the roadway ascended sharply with inconvenient windings, and the whole little corner was closed in with trees and shrubby undergrowth manifestly in the laudable design of making it invisible from the house. The result was most successful; on the terrace you could just see the bird-house, a charming bit of decoration amongst tree-tops; and Luther, for his part, led his hermit existence at the bottom of a kind of woodsy well. Looking up from the gravelled esplanade where he washed or tinkered at the cars, the dense greenery rose in successive tiers to the limit of the view broken only where the drive climbed till it vanished at a turn of the slope, and by the stepping-stone short-cut to the terrace. Ellie would have appraised it with justice as very secluded, lonesome and "country," qualities highly valued on the North Hill.

"Of course a machine makes a good deal of noise coming up the hill," Juliet said deprecatingly; "but that's only once in a while, so it doesn't matter. Every other way the service quarters on the place are perfect. You can't tell where the buildings are—they're near enough but so carefully isolated, you know." It was on account of this same isolation, no doubt, that she was obliged to run down to the garage herself one day; something was the matter with the telephone, or else Nichols must be outside where he couldn't hear it, she told her mother.

Luther, in fact, was outside, pottering around an automobile; he glanced up and saw her coming featly down the stepping-stone path. She had on a little slip of a dress in the deliberately immature style of the day that suited so well the slim yet suave lines of her figure; there was a straight blouse wrinkling around the waist, with a deeply-opened collar and flowing tie. Her feet were in ridiculous little clumping brogans of white canvas with bizarre stripes and bindings of shining black. She was carrying a wad of light stuff in one half-extended hand; the sun was very brilliant on her hair, as she looked down, choosing her steps.

The young man felt as if his heart shifted, quivering, to the middle of his breast and stationed itself there, seriously incommoding his breathing. He collected himself with desperate effort, and bent again over the hood, resolved on pretending not to be aware of her, since she had no air of looking at or for him. It was not until her adorable, absurd brogans gritted on the gravel that he straightened up with an ejaculation: *"Oh!"*

Their eyes met; whatever meaning Luther put into or tried to keep out of his, in hers there was none. He would have recognized, would have known how to deal

with, either defiance or evasion; but those oddly beautiful, pellucid green depths were unfathomable.

"Oh, good-morning!" she said, in a manner of casual, almost automatic civility, and glanced about inquiringly. "Have we any gasoline? I want to clean something."

Luther copied her to a nicety, eyeing with impersonal interest the article to be cleaned, which looked to him like one of those filmy nothingnesses he had remarked heretofore on his trips to the morning-room. "Why yes, Miss Ordway, we got gasoline, o' course. But it ain't hardly th' kind they clean with, I don't think."

"Why, what's the matter with it?"

"Well, it's all kinda thick 'n' gummy-like. You wouldn't wanta clean no nice thing with it," said Luther, honestly. The next minute, he inwardly anathematized himself for a fool, a lunkhead, an absolute dumb-bell! Why, why in the name of something unprintable, had he said anything against or about the gasoline? Now she would go away! "Of course, it *might* be all right—I don't know—you—I mean a person c'ld *try*——" he stuttered precipitately.

Their eyes met again. Miss Ordway certainly did not smile, but just as certainly she seemed to be holding a smile back. "I didn't know there was any difference in gasoline. I thought it was all the same kind."

"Oh, it *is!* Sure, it *is!* It's all th' one kind," Luther asseverated vigorously. To his fluttered relief, she made no motion to go away, but continued to stand with that expression of doubtful interpretation. "Will I get you some?" he asked eagerly, and made a half movement towards the garage.

"But if it's all dirty——?"

She *was* smiling. All at once, Luther recovered his poise; by some grateful miracle, self-possession and a

sense of mastering the situation or at any rate of being equal to it, descended upon him out of nowhere. He checked himself on the edge of an assertion to the effect that the gasoline was as pure as distilled dewdrops. "Well, it's just like I said, there'll be *some* dirt in it. But I guess I c'n strain most of it out," he said, his black eyes holding hers steadily. "That's all they do at th' cleaners."

"Oh, if you will, please? That is, if it's not too much trouble——?"

She sat down on the running-board of the car, watching him while he marched off and marched back collecting a pan, a sieve of archaic pattern lined with a cheesecloth rag, a gallon can of the fluid. A portentous gravity accompanied all these actions and indeed enveloped the entire scene; they might have been a young priest and priestess engaged in some ancient and pious rite, perhaps preparing the mystic instruments wherewith to accomplish a spell or question the oracle.

"It's lucky you had all those things," Juliet said, as he began to pour.

"I strain it myself times—when it gets low so it don't run nice, y'know."

"I do think it has the worst smell!"

"I'm so useta it, I don't notice hardly. You wanta put that in, now? Here, I'll set th' basin on something——" He routed out a backless chair from the work-room, and carefully disposed the brimming pan on it. Juliet got up, and gravely immersed her handful of gossamer flummery, poking it under the surface with the tips of her fingers, and dabbling it up and down. It was Luther's turn to stand by and watch; an hour, even a few minutes earlier he would have thought it precious enough to be so near her, to be spoken to directly by her, to share her

trivial employment. But now he found it more tantalizing than any meeting in public with a dozen people within sight and hearing. They were alone together at last, and time was passing, and he was as much in the dark as ever. Did she know him? Didn't she know him? She *could* not have forgotten! But then, why——?

"I'm afraid I'm not much of a laundress—or a dry-cleaner," said Juliet, pushing the garment about. "It's a good thing it's nothing but this one old waist."

"That's what we useta call Mis' Blossmeyer's wash, at home."

She stood up straight, looking at him in frank curiosity, putting her pretty hair off her forehead with the back of her hand. "Who was Miss Blossmeyer?"

"She was a old lady that useta never do her whole wash at oncet—just a piece here 'n' a piece there, y'know, 'n' dry 'em on th' fence——" He joined in her trill of laughter. "Yeh, that's th' way she done. It always made ev'body laugh."

"Oh, the funny old thing! Where was that?"

"Where I useta live—in th' country——" said Luther, with an accession of his habitual reticence. He was surprised and annoyed at himself for having betrayed that "country" origin. "It's a good while ago," he added quickly.

Juliet resumed operations. "I thought you'd always lived here," she said, paddling diligently with her eyes on the waist.

Luther looked down at her sidelong. A silence fell that was somehow charged with significance. He had to make a slight effort in speaking, and his voice when it came was a little husky. "I been here some time. I like livin' in town. I like t' go t' th' pitcher-shows. You go ever?"

"Yes. Oh, yes." She did not seem to be having any trouble with *her* voice; it was silvery clear and cool.

"I went t' see one, one time, called——" Luther halted in blank dismay; he had clean forgotten what that memorable entertainment was called—and no wonder! "Annabelle Pickett was in it," he said lamely.

"Oh, Annabelle Pickett!" said Juliet, straightening again. She rested her fingers on the edge of the basin, and looked squarely at him. "She's so pretty!"

"Think so? I seen prettier," said Luther, who believed that he knew how to reply to any remark of that nature made by a girl. "Her hair in the pitchers looks like it might be something like yours," said he boldly, in a tone calculated accurately to convey complete disparagement of Miss Pickett's hair. "Only it ain't near so——"

"Ford's good-looking, too," said Juliet, interrupting hastily. "He——" She broke off; for an infinitesimal fraction of a second the green eyes wavered. It flashed upon Luther that he himself had made no mention of Ford! A wild hope, a wild determination raced tumultuously through his brain that was already in enough of a tumult to match his senses. "This time I'm talkin' about, Ford was in it, too. But I don't know what th' fillum was called, nor what they done, nor nothin' about it, hardly," he said. "I wasn't noticin' 'em. *D'you* remember?"

Juliet faced him with a gaze as impervious as before, then turned to the waist, lifting it out of the gasoline with steady and governed movements. "Ford's a good actor," she said, as if finishing her previous speech without having heard Luther's. "They act together a good deal—not all the time, though." She shook out the bit of chiffon with a decisive flap, as if putting a period to the conversation, and began to move away.

Luther stood an instant in doubt whether he was defeated or not; but this indirection might well be construed a surrender. He took two strides to her side. "Better let me wring that out," he said with a gesture towards the thing; but, instead of taking it from her, his hand closed over hers.

She paused, stiffening, but without any effort to withdraw herself. "Don't do that!" Luther's grasp tightened. "Why not? It ain't th' first time, and you know it!" he said in a choking voice. "Why not, huh?"

"Well, you hurt me, for one reason," said the girl coolly.

Instant remorse engulfed him; he saw himself the lowest of brutes, taking vile advantage of his strength to tyrannize and torture. He relaxed his hold, exclaiming aloud in shame and self-abasement. "Hurt——? Oh, I didn't! Honest, I didn't, did I? I didn't go to! Why, I wouldn't f'r anything! Oh, say, you know I wouldn't, don't you? You don't think I'd hurt you? Why, I wouldn't lay a finger on you, less'n you—less'n I——"

His distressed pleadings were abruptly cut short at sight of some new expression on her face. The luminous eyes met his with soft, mirthful challenge; they teased, relented, invited bewilderingly; she radiated intolerable provocation, half-promise and half-denial. "It didn't hurt really. I just wanted to stop you. Because you *can't,* you know. It's too silly! You *can't!*" she barely breathed, and escaped his arms and sped up the steps, leaving the young man in a daze of foolish delight.

## VI

Luther scarcely knew how he got through that day, or the two or three succeeding days. He went about in a muddle of ill-assorted and opposing sensations, gratified vanity, a happy arrogance contending with perplexity and a skepticism that would not down. With an ample faith in his own conquering endowment, a faith which seemed to be justified, he nevertheless doubted, questioned. She loves me, she loves me not! At moments the thing wore every aspect of impossibility; his saner mood discounted it; it was too good to be true. A girl like her, with her looks, her clothes, her money, might take her pick anywhere; it was past belief that she would pick *him*. But that was exactly what she had done, down there at the moving-picture theatre; and even if he had been fooling himself or letting her fool him that time, how about this other? Luther sat smiling fatuously to recall it; anon he got up and tramped about to quell the riot in his blood, remembering her eyes, her half-whispered words. Reason and common-sense laid down their arms and withdrew, vanquished partly by facts, partly by forces in the end ten times more potent; he gave himself up to hot dreams.

The young man had too good a sense of intrigue not to understand after a fashion the skill of Juliet's manoeuvres, and the eminent need for her to manoeuvre. He expected it of her; that was always the woman's part. In the event of discovery she would be the heavy loser, like all women in the same position from Eve

down; but, like all men from Adam down, Luther did not look that far ahead. He was not ungenerous about mutual risks and responsibilities, he was merely unconscious of them. Duplicity comes naturally to women, let them practice it! He never gave a serious thought to those final adjurations of hers. He *couldn't!* Oh, couldn't he? And it was "silly," was it? Luther did not say to himself that these were the perfunctory flourishes of virtue about to strike its colors; he said she thought she had to make that grand-stand play. In his spasms of uneasiness and uncertainty, reassurance visited him, ironically enough, with the recollection of those warnings. The only way for her to put a stop to the business was to put a stop to it! He could not be "silly" unless she deliberately made an opportunity for him to be "silly." Luther was quite acute enough to see that point, and he may be pardoned his smile at the ways of women.

In the meanwhile, beset as he was with alternations of confidence and anxiety, losing sleep at night, and the prey of a well-nigh overpowering disposition to moon around doing nothing but dream and wonder all day, he must still go about his professional affairs, he must still be the civil, impassive, efficient chauffeur. He saw Juliet every day, he waited on her, he went errands for her, he even drove with her in the seat beside him, just as before, just as if nothing had happened. Now and then, whenever he thought it safe, he stole an ardent look at her, longing to trap one in return; now and then he managed to touch her dress, her hand. But all in vain these innocently dull masculine devices! As always heretofore, her manner continued to strike that nice mean between ignoring him and noticing him which characterizes the attitude of a well-bred master towards a

well-bred servant. It was, of course, vitally prudent; none the less, Luther felt something inhuman or perhaps superhuman about this self-command; against his will, it suggested an intrinsic cold-bloodedness. No girl that he had ever known would have been capable of it; but, as he constantly reminded himself, he had never known a "society girl" like Juliet Ordway.

Then, out of a clear sky, there fell upon him the blighting intelligence that the family were going away! To be sure, it was only what was to be expected; about or before the middle of June, the North Hill invariably decamped in a body to its cottages at Bar Harbor, at Sag, at Murray Bay, to hotels in the White Mountains, to European spas, to anywhere and everywhere rather than suffer the midsummer heats of the Ohio Valley. But not infrequently they motored all the way, or they sent their cars ahead with the rest of their equipment and household; Mr. Ordway had asked Luther if he was "willing to travel"? Needless to state, that prince of chauffeurs was perfectly willing; he had spent some time evolving persuasions to employ on Ellie—time wasted, as now appeared, for they had decided not to take a car. New and more agonizing doubts invaded him. Juliet must have had a voice in that decision; he believed that she always had her own way, especially with her father; if she had wanted him, he would have been taken, no question of it. Then why——? The miserable round began again.

The house, however, was to be left open; everything was to go on as usual; Mrs. Ordway told all her friends, Juliet told all hers, that whatever the expense of keeping the servants all summer in comparative idleness—positive for the chauffeur, as he really would have nothing to do—their present staff, taken as a whole, but

particularly with regard to Nichols, was too satisfactory to let go. There was a good deal of to-do about putting everything into summer undress; the draperies must come down, rugs and furs must be stored; ere long all the furniture was encased in ghostly white covers, wardrobe-trunks and hat-boxes were haled from the attic; and Luther, presenting himself in the morning-room, found it more cluttered than ever with mounds of delicate fripperies emptied out of the drawers and closets, to say nothing of the boxes he was kept busy fetching from shops and modistes all over town. Nichols was so reliable! He would find any place, hunt up any person, deliver any message correctly, act to the point in any emergency without directions. They even sent him to buy the tickets and make their Pullman reservations.

There were multiple small last-minute errands besides, so that he was told to take Mr. Joe's runabout; and just as he was crossing the terrace, Miss Ordway, running downstairs in a breath-taking hurry, called him: "Oh—ah—Nichols!"

Luther turned, saluting as was his wont, standing before her erect and mannerly; any onlooker—and, in fact, there were easily half a dozen what with other servants passing to and fro, the gardener tinkering at his lawn-mower in the shade of the porte-cochère, and a couple of men from the storage company working among the upholstered furniture in the living-room—any onlooker, I repeat, would have been impressed by the becoming propriety of the behaviour of both actors in this little scene.

"Nichols, I wish you would stop at the Club coming back and get my racquet, will you?" said Juliet in a particularly clear, distinct, carrying voice. Even the gardener, the farthest away of them all, heard her and

looked up, pausing with the screwdriver in his hand to admire her hair.

"Yes, Miss Ordway." He turned again, to go; they could all see and hear him, too.

"Oh—ah—how long do you think you will be?" said Juliet; she had on a rich trifle of a watch, strapped around her slim little wrist, and consulted it elaborately. "You ought to get to the Club before five o'clock. If there's no one playing, they close the locker-room at five and go home, you know."

Luther gave her a long look with his smouldering black eyes. "Five o'clock. I'll try to get there, Miss Ordway." He saluted again and walked off; and who will insinuate that anything had passed except that which had passed openly before the world? It's a pretty time of day if a young lady cannot go down and call the chauffeur and give him a commonplace order accompanied by some commonplace instructions without scandalous misinterpretations being put upon the act. Nevertheless, Nichols went off to carry out this specific commonplace order in a singularly disproportionate elation. Even the heartrending business of buying the tickets to facilitate her departure could not depress him now. The Country Club at five! He carefully apportioned the intervening time amongst his other errands, one of which led him to Ellie's shop of all places on earth; the last time Luther had been there was during his tenure of office with Mrs. Grace, when Mrs. Marshall Cook and some friend of hers on a shopping tour had stopped the car to go in and price a hat in the window. They ended by buying it, and ten or fifteen dollars' worth of *Janice* wares to boot; Ellie—*Madame Elise*—was a good saleswoman.

She was doing well. The little place with its one

window across which the legend *Madame Elise, Hat Shoppe*—slanted in flowing script with an intricate rubric sweeping away from the final letter, wore a chic, modish, ultra-sophisticated air as definite as Luther's own. Elegantly silhouetted against the ivory-tinted panels of the false wall back of the window, a hat of dull green velvet with heavy ostrich plumes drooping straight like fringe was poised on a slender black stick; there was a bag of Chinese brocade, a pair of long mole-grey gloves fantastically embroidered, a string of jade beads; and in one corner the cameo shapes and colorings of the *Janice* phials, jars, boxes and so on, ranked together under a card setting forth that Madame Elise was the sole distributor thereof in this territory, made a bid for feminine attention. Inside there was a shrine-like quiet and atmosphere of exclusiveness, wherein any man felt conspicuously out of place; Luther with his gauntlets, his leggings, his cavalier figure, looked even more out of place than he felt. The truth was that Ellie did not encourage his coming; she had two young girl assistants now, both of them trim and sightly to behold. She would have purveyed herself gorgons, Medusas, Witches-of-Endor, had that not been in violent opposition to good business tactics; they had to be moderately personable, so as to show off the hats. What would you have? It is impossible to make an omelet without breaking eggs. One of the girls came forward to wait on him; the other was attending to some hat-purchasing lady, but these latter suspended negotiations, and all three of them stared hard at Luther as he inquired for Mrs. Ordway's parcel. Madame Elise was occupied at the moment, it appeared; a murmuring might be heard from behind the wall-board partition at the rear where in her office she was reported to be holding a "conference" with a gentleman from New York. Luther di-

vined that this must be Federmann; for no lesser created being would Ellie have abandoned even momentarily her field-marshal's post in the shop. Beyond a doubt it was Federmann, the oracle, the fellow-worker, the kindred spirit; shades of Othello and Rawdon Crawley, avoid ye! Luther, however, was not dreaming of jealousy—not he! It is much to be feared that Ellie was welcome to Federmann, or the other way around, for all of Luther; and for that matter, his own house was of so fragile a material, he could not well afford to throw stones.

On the way back to the Hill, he was divided between speculations as to what Juliet was going to do, and the jubilant certainty that she meant to do *something;* the Club at five. It was a little mysterious; the place was alive with people coming and going constantly; that anything — anything — shall we say *interesting?* — should come to pass there was unimaginable. Once or twice, doubt fluttered, bat-wise, around his mind again; suppose he were mistaken? Suppose, in his eagerness, he had fancied a meaning in her words when there actually had been none? Suppose—he turned in at the gates, passed the first tee, drew up before the steps. She was there.

She was sitting with some people in one of the bays that jutted out from the verandah at intervals to provide a sort of alcove for a table of bridge or afternoon tea while one waited for the players to come in from the links. Luther knew by sight some of the flannel trousers and gay coloured, abbreviated skirts lounging there with her; a dart of sincere hatred for the trousers stabbed him through, followed by a gnawing curiosity as to whether any one of the wearers had ever held her hand. She sat facing the road but apparently did not see him, and Luther, in a lightning-brief debate with himself, decided that he could not do better than take the cue.

He went up the steps, and intercepting a steward, explained that he had come for Miss Ordway's racquet. She was scarcely thirty feet away; and in a moment he heard one of them saying: "Isn't that your car, Ju? Oh, I know it is, there's your man!"

He did not turn around. She said: "I believe it is!" Her chair scraped as she got up; and she called out in that same civilly authoritative manner to which he had grown accustomed in his dealings with the employers' class: "Is that you, Nichols? Never mind about the racquet. It's all right. I came over and got it myself."

"Yes, Miss Ordway."

They all got up and sauntered with her towards the steps; Luther went down to the car. He supposed she would get in at once; but the little comedy was not yet over.

"Tell my brother—Mr. Joe Ordway, you know?—tell him the car's here, please," said Juliet to the steward, and sat down on the porch railing, and went on talking with the others. There was some idle joking, some gossip, some alluding to the Long Island and White Sulphur visits she was going to make, some promising of letters; Luther patiently waited, and the steward came back.

"Mr. Ordway isn't in the Club, miss."

"He *isn't?*" said Juliet on a high note of surprise. Somebody suggested that he hadn't got around yet. "Oh, well, I'm not going to wait for him," she announced with decision. "If they lose a ball, or if Joe's got into the rough, he'll be forever. I've got to finish packing." She got down from the rail, and after some protracted good-byeing and one or two false starts, at last one of the men handed her into the runabout.

They steered around the driveway, and down to the road in silence; normally, they would be only a few

minutes in reaching the house, a fact which, however, Luther had already taken under advisement. He was still uncertain; yes, now, this moment, spite of his sanguine intuitions, he was uncertain of her. She sat beside him as unconsciously, as unconcernedly, as if those hectic passages it stirred him so to remember had never been, as if she had never plotted this very meeting—and perhaps she had not! But Luther's shyness was rapidly evaporating; it seemed to him that things might as well move a little faster, and that it had now become emphatically his affair to accelerate them. He addressed himself to the wheel with a studious caution so pronounced that it finally drew a comment from her.

"Is anything the matter? You're going so slow."

"She ain't hitting right," said Luther seriously. And presently thereafter, frowning, with a slight negative motion of the head, he went quartering across the road and brought up abruptly almost in the ditch; the engine gave vent to a few stentorian remarks, subsided into mutterings, expired! Luther got out, took off his gloves, and went through what other pantomime he could think of, that might appear preparatory to an investigation. He had chosen the spot with care; it was a nook of the road where automobiles must approach warily from either direction on account of curves which, if rounded at too free a gait, might launch them headforemost at a length of high retaining-wall; and elsewhere there were rough hedges, and banks planted to a tangle of honeysuckle and wild roses that made walking difficult and sure to be heralded with a deal of noise, though a path had been worn through in one place. Possibly Miss Ordway made mental note of these adjuncts—so to name them—to the breakdown, for she sent a quick, observant glance all about; otherwise the green eyes

expressed only an anxious curiosity as she watched Luther ostentatiously getting out his key to unlock the hood.

"Is anything broken?"

"Nothin' but what I c'n fix, I guess," said Luther, obliged to make a few "grand-stand plays" himself at examining the perfectly sound and unoffending mechanism.

Juliet sat forward, craning to look with more interest. "If somebody comes along, they'll offer to help you, of course."

"I guess I c'n fix that, too," said Luther.

They looked at each other. Juliet made a movement, beginning to speak, then checked herself upon some sudden change of mind. She looked around again, and it was with eyes and face as inscrutable as ever that she said: "Well, if you can't get it going, I can walk across from here. Isn't that the path?" She nodded towards it.

"You—you gotta go through Loring's a little piece," Luther stammered, taken aback. It was as if she had opened a door into the forbidden, walled, secret, rapturous Eden of his dreams, for one dazzling instant, and then slammed it in his face. "Th' machine ain't that bad, though," he added, pleadingly.

"Still you may have some trouble fixing it. I'd better get out," said Juliet; and she hopped down briskly before he could put out a hand to her. In dismay, he beheld her tripping over to the opening in the underbrush, as if about to essay it. "It looks as if people went through there a good deal. I shouldn't think Mr. Loring would like it."

"They can't see you from th' house. Ev'body uses it. I do myself when I go out nights to mail letters f'r

y'r mother, or anything. Lorings don't mind——" Luther began, desperately talking against time. Then he revised his statements in a panic. "On'y it ain't good walking—it ain't a bit good. There's burrs—'n' thorns——" He broke down in dire confusion under her coolly inquiring eyes. He was convinced that she knew there was nothing the matter with the runabout; had it been any other woman, any woman of the type he had hitherto known, he would have suspected that she was trying to tease him after the accepted feminine fashion; but this one——! There was nothing of the coquette about her; she baffled him utterly without recourse to a single one of the cheap, well-worn tricks he would have recognized. He stood, making no further pretense of working at the engine, watching her with moody and puzzled eyes; and she faced him unembarrassed, with another light, defeating speech.

"That stone wall is really dangerous. It's lucky the machine didn't get out of control, or we might have run into it and broken our necks!"

"Well, if I did break mine, it would be 'bout th' best thing I c'ld do, I guess!" said Luther tragically.

Juliet went nearer to him, eyeing him as he stood looking down, kicking at a stone underfoot. "Why, what makes you want to break your neck?"

Her eyes were suddenly soft; there was that hint of laughter in them, yet they were soft—or so the infatuated young man thought. He looked at her with flaming hope. "You're going away, that's why!"

"But I'll be back in September."

"Aw, September's a million years off! Aw, you know I'm crazy about you!"

To his chagrined astonishment, she began to laugh; her whole lovely face went into dimples. "Oh, you *are*

so funny!" She threw back her head and laughed and laughed. Flesh and blood could not withstand the desire to dominate her. Luther was by her side in a step; he seized her hand, he would have taken her around that supple waist, he would have kissed that white throat, but she arrested him with a swift, warning gesture. He thought she had heard some one coming, and retreated headlong to the engine. They both stood like statues for a tense minute; but the road remained empty and silent.

"You're foolin' me again," said Luther in reproachful accents; but she held her ground fearlessly, fending him off with a compelling movement. "Aw, *please!*" he murmured boyishly.

'Now listen to me!" said Juliet, and she went daringly up to him, speaking in a low voice but with force. "If you go around looking like a funeral, somebody will be sure to suspect something. That's what I wanted to get a chance to tell you today. I have to think up all kinds of stories to account for—for everything, you know, but it won't do a bit of good unless *you're* more careful. You mustn't look at me that way—the way you do, you know. You must *not!* Why, I oughtn't to have to tell you! You ought to know yourself that you can't look at me that way——"

"I can't help th' way I look," said Luther, illustrating with his black eyes. There was enough fire and meaning in them to have put many a more seasoned campaigner than this mere girl out of countenance, one would have thought, but the clear green gaze never faltered.

"Well, if you want everything to finish right now——!" said Juliet, shrugging. "Being silly is the way to do it! People will notice something—and then it's all off! I oughtn't to have to tell you," she repeated almost impatiently. "You ought to think of—of things

yourself. Only you're so funny!" A smile twitched at the corners of her mouth again.

"Well, I'll try!" Luther sighed. "But you're going Sat'day an'—an'—won't I get t' see you again? Like this, I mean?"

"Goodness, *I* don't know. I can't tell. This was just a chance, you know. I just happened to think of it. I can't do it again. It's got to be something different every time," said the girl. "*You* can't do anything——"

"Can't, huh? Looks like I c'ld put th' engine on th' blink all right,' said Luther, spiritedly; he was rather puffed up over this piece of guile—not without reason, to judge by results; but even as they both laughed, he dimly detected in Juliet's mirth, some overtone foreign to his own. She might be laughing not only with him, but a little at him, or at some phase of the situation which he did not envisage.

"Oh, you *are* too funny!" she said once more; and then with abrupt gravity: "But you know you can't do that again. It's just as I say. the same thing can't happen twice; if we were to have engine trouble every time we went out together, why, you can see for yourself——" Her gesture completed the argument.

This was sound and practical strategy, and Luther did see for himself, though unwillingly. "Well, but look here, there'd oughta be other ways," he urged. "September! Gee! I can't wait all that time. I—I *gotta* see you again, onct anyhow, before you go. Aw, *please!* Just onct! You c'n fix it somehow."

"I don't know. Maybe. No! *No!* You can't *now,* not *here.* Somebody might come any minute. Don't be silly!" She snatched her hand away from his. none too soon, for at that same instant, Joe Ordway came around the farther turn.

## VII

Luther choked back a whole-hearted imprecation; couldn't they have had a half-minute more, and couldn't it have been anybody but her brother that interrupted? The very devil was in the luck! But, in another second he perceived with bottomless relief that, if that were so, the devil must be for once amicably disposed. Country road walking on a hot June afternoon is not the most refreshing of recreations for a puffy, little, short-legged man weighing at the least a hundred and seventy; and Joe who had been bowling along at a great rate with the unnaturally extended stride he affected, had just been constrained to take off his hat and exercise a handkerchief all over his wet pink brow and face. The act momentarily interfered with his vision, and by the time he got a distant view of them, Luther was intently occupied with the engine, and Juliet looked on standing aloof in the shade. Joe was so near-sighted that details escaped him, but there was no mistaking the line of his sister's shoulders, the matchless round slenderness of those liberally revealed legs; he saw her, as always, with his thrill of troubled admiration. She glanced up, gave a start and exclamation and ran to meet him.

"*Joe!* Have you been home all this time? Why, I thought you were out playing! I waited for you over there ever so long!"

"I haven't been out. It's too hot. I don't know what made you think I'd gone out. I was at the house when you left," said Joe, his spectacled gaze travelling from

her to Luther in a rather disquieting fashion. "Anything happen to the car?"

"Why, it stalled—it wouldn't budge. He's got it fixed, though, I think."

Joe strolled over, just as Luther, a little too hurriedly, slammed the hood down into place. "What was the matter?"

"Sir? Why—why—she wasn't hitting right," said Luther in a fluster. He was still taut and trembling from the scene, just past, from the touch of her hand, from the confirmation of an unbelievable good fortune. This encounter startled him with its revelation of risks he had been ignorantly underrating; he had thought himself prepared, but now in the actual crisis, his mind agitated futilely in blankness.

"Oh, it didn't stall, then?"

"No, sir. I—I—I shut down," Luther said, driven to the truth by sheer helplessness.

"Oh, I thought it stalled," said Juliet with a kind of indifferent surprise. "It's no matter anyway if you've fixed it."

"Yes, it's fixed—it's all right now," said Luther, moving nervously about the machine, conscious of young Ordway's stare following him.

"Did you get the tickets?"

"Yes, sir. You want them now, Mr. Ordway?"

"Why, yes, you may as well give them to me now, I suppose," said Joe; and Luther got them out, fumbling amongst the envelopes with hasty and awkward fingers in his relief at getting upon what should be tolerably safe ground; he dropped one of them and picked it up after some clumsy pawings at it, red in the face and blaspheming inwardly. He was being "funny" now, sure enough—dangerously so!

Joe took them and stowed them in a pocket, and mopped around his head, his hat, the inside of his collar again, with a more or less inquiring eye on the others all the while. Then he said: "I'll take the car to the house, Nichols. That is, if it'll be all right——? If you think it won't lay down again ——?"

"Oh, sure not! I—I mean it's all right now," said Luther, beginning to breathe more freely.

"Well, you take this over to Mrs. Lawson Rudd—you know the house?" And, as Luther nodded with his eyes on the package which was very palpably a bottle, Joe smiled a little. "Never mind what it is! You don't know!" he said pointedly. "Not unless you want to get hauled up before Judge Haldane, that is!"

He was naming a jurist on the Federal bench whose main occupation, of late, had been with infractions of the Eighteenth Amendment; and Luther smiled, too. "Yes, sir. Will I whistle all th' way sir?" he asked as he took the flask, whereat Joe looked puzzled for an instant, then restrained an involuntary grin, then spoke more curtly and reservedly.

"That's all. You can go now."

Luther did not trust himself to look at Juliet; otherwise he had got his nerves in hand and was once more the discreet, well-behaved underling; he walked away without another word. Joe clambered, puffing, into the automobile where his sister was already established. He manipulated the starter tentatively, half expecting some hitch, but it worked as usual; the engine responded, the machine rolled off smoothly.

"Get your racquet?"

"Yes. There were some people there. I stayed for a while."

"Did Nichols stop for you?" Joe asked abruptly, turn-

ing towards her his round face with the perpetual slight scowl caused by the defect in his vision; it gave him the air of a worried cherub. "Is that how you happened to be coming home with him?"

"Yes, I told him to," said Juliet, meeting his eye openly.

"Well, what was the matter with him, anyhow? He seemed to be all up in the air—nervous—something ——"

"Did *you* notice that, too?" said Juliet, with interest. "I thought maybe I just fancied it. Why, I don't know what was the matter, Joe, unless it was because he had such a time fussing over the engine. It's pretty hot, you know, and I think he would have liked to take his coat off, only he thought he oughtn't to before me. Or maybe he was afraid I'd blame him for the engine getting out of order. But I really don't know. I just noticed that he was all upset, somehow."

Her brother made an inarticulate sound of doubtful interpretation; he was silent for a minute with his attention fixed on juggling neatly around a chuck-hole in the road. Joe was a good driver, though anything but graceful. He looked at her again. "I thought I saw him stick out his hand—put it out as if he was going to take hold of you——? It was just as I came along——"

*"Stick out his hand?"* ejaculated Juliet, blankly. "Stick out——?" Then all at once her face lightened. "Oh, I know what you saw! Why, he *did* stick out his hand! It was when he picked a big wasp off the front of my skirt. He did it very quick. too—just like a flash. I must have jumped a yard!"

"Oh!" Joe grunted again, but this time the grunt expressed a qualified relief. "Was *that* it? I should think he'd have been afraid of getting stung himself."

"Oh, no, he had his glove on——" Juliet stopped. "Or a rag in his hand, or something," she ended fluently.

"Well, it looked rather queer from where I was. You want to be pretty careful with him, anyhow, I think. You heard what he said to me just now. I imagine he might be pretty familiar, if you gave him any encouragement. That class, you know; they aren't half civilized. You ought to be careful," her brother reiterated in his habitually didactic style, upon which Juliet promptly reverted to her habitually rebellious one.

"Well, I'd rather he'd *be* familiar than let me get all stung up by an old wasp!" she said with asperity; and thereafter conversation languished. The two were eternally at odds.

The family dressed and dined in an unaccustomed disorder of furniture out of place, sounding bare floors, unrelated chairs herded together into corners. "We ought to have gone in to the Preston or any of the hotels for these last days," Mr. Ordway said, surveying the desolation with strong disfavor. "We're not actually uncomfortable, but this tenement-house-on-moving-day effect gives an illusion of discomfort somehow."

"It's cooler here than it would be in town, and I'd have had to come out every day anyhow," his wife said in fatigued explanation. "We'll be in hotels most of the summer as it is."

"Next year, let's have a cottage somewhere," said Juliet.

"If you and Joey could only agree on the place——!"

"If they could only agree about anything!"

"Why don't you say if Juliet could only agree with herself?" said Joe. "She's the one that's hard to satisfy,

and she never stays satisfied any length of time. It's always something new or something different."

Juliet made no answer; she grimaced knowingly at her father, who invariably sided with her in any dispute, irrespective of right or reason. She drew down the tip of her nose, pursing her mouth, flashing him a glance brilliant with mischief out of her odd, disturbing eyes. There was an elfin charm about the act; she might have been Puck in skirts—very limited skirts of appropriately cobwebby texture. The elder Ordway returned the look with one of boundless pride and fondness.

They were sitting at the table in the semi-dismantled dining-room which an expensive genius from New York had decorated for Mrs. Ordway in the Chinese taste, to borrow from his own phraseology; that is, with silver tea-box paper on the walls. old crimson brocade hangings, pagoda-shaped porcelains on a teakwood chest, and a deal more in the way of mirrors, embroidered screens and black lacquer. Even denuded of most of these properties, the room retained something of its Oriental character at once severe and sensuous; a heavy, plain writing-table brought in from the room they called the den, though inoffensive in its own place, appeared a bumptious interloper amidst all this mysterious and exotic elegance.

"Where to tonight, Juliet?" her father asked. "That's a party-dress, isn't it?'

"Oh, *father!* Not any more *party* than I put on every single night of my life. and you see me in it! If anybody asked me anywhere I'd go."

"Ah, well, clothes have gone out of style," Mr Ordway observed profoundly. "The girls don't wear any more than they can help at any time. They've all got those V-shaped patches of sunburn on their necks; I don't

like it myself—cooking up a nice, fine skin like yours." Joseph senior eyed his daughter's neck critically. "It looks as if it must sting and smart."

Juliet arched her neck, tucking in her dimpled chin, looking down at herself. "It *is* red," she said. "I'll have to borrow some of your *Janice* goo, mother."

"I will *give* you some. I ordered a supply to take away; we probably won't be able to get it everywhere, and you're always running out of things. Oh, what do you think——?"

"What is this stuff you use wholesale?"

Both ladies explained in unison. It was a cold cream; it came in the cunningest blue jars; it was the *nicest* thing! For the skin, you know. To put on and powder over when you went out motoring, or on the water. *Everybody was using it*—— "And what do you think——?"

"But why doesn't Juliet have her own supply?"

"At two-dollars-and-a-half a jar? As if I *could!*"

"Why, Juliet, this economy is most laudable——"

"Ju isn't economical, Dad, she's broke, that's what she is!"

"But what do you think?" said Mrs. Ordway for the third time. "I've discovered something! Madame Elise—that's what she calls herself, but of course anybody would know that it's just a name—one of those milliner's names, you know——?"

"A *nom de* jar, or *nom de* hat, hey?" inquired Mr. Ordway.

"Yes. But what do you think? She's really Mrs. Nichols!" said his wife, dramatically.

This information did not produce the sensation she apparently expected; it only had—as Mr. Ordway might have said—a *succés de curiosité*. They all looked at her

questioningly, and Joseph junior finally said: "Nichols? Well, what of it?"

"Why, it's *our* Nichols—our chauffeur Nichols. She's his wife!"

"Well, what of *that?*" said Joe, after another moment. blinking behind his spectacles. "I knew that already. Mrs. Grace told me when I asked her about him."

"You never said a word about it!" said Juliet.

"Didn't I? I suppose I forgot to. But other people know. Mrs. Meigs knows. They spoke about it the other night."

"Well, *I* didn't know! I thought I'd made a discovery," said his mother a little disconcerted.

"It isn't of the least consequence anyhow," Juliet said.

"Oh, I don't know—I think it's a pretty good thing," said the older Ordway. "It steadies a young man to be married."

"Well, I was very much surprised. He doesn't look at all married—but perhaps that's because they have to live separately all the time, except when he has his nights off—his days off, I mean," Mrs. Ordway amended hastily, with a faint accession of color over her pretty middle-aged face. "She—Madame Elise Nichols, you know—was very anxious for me to understand that there was no trouble. They are perfectly devoted, but they both have to work, that's all. She said she didn't let people in general know she was married for business reasons."

"You must have had a heart-to-heart talk with her." said her husband drily.

"Why, the way it happened, I ordered this dozen jars of Créme Janice—she pronounces it Jan*eece*, so everybody else has to, too—and told her I'd send my man in

for it. But I didn't have that much money, of course——"

"Mother's broke, too!" ejaculated Joe. "I see your finish, Dad!" The men winked at each other, on the broad grin.

"No, I'm *not!* And *do* let me tell this, Joey. So I asked her if I could charge it, and gave the bank for a reference. And then as soon as I began giving her the address, she smiled and put her pencil down, and said in a very nice way: 'Oh, that will be all right, Mrs. Ordway, I know all about you. My husband works for you.' I was *so* surprised!"

"Kind of hard on a young couple living apart that way," said Mr. Ordway, sympathetically; he was a kind-hearted man.

"What's she like?" Juliet asked.

"Oh, she's ordinarily nice-looking. Her face very much fixed, the way all those people do, you know."

"She can't be a very good advertisement for the Créme."

"No. And it's a little funny, because Nichols himself is rather striking. She told me they had been married three years. He must have been a mere boy."

"He'd probably display better taste now," said Joe. "It's as the connoisseurs say about some of Raphael's paintings; Nichols' wife was in his early, bad manner."

There was a silence, nobody being quite certain how to take this remark, until Juliet said: "Why, Joe, that sounds just as if Donelson Meigs had said it first!" And then indeed everybody laughed, and very heartily, at poor Joe's red face.

The butler came with the announcement that Mrs. Rudd was telephoning; and Joe departed to the instru-

ment, returning in a few minutes. "She wanted to thank you for the brandy, mother; and she wants us to come over."

"Well, who *is* 'us' exactly?" Juliet asked.

"Why, everybody, I understood her to mean. I said I'd speak to the rest of you, and she didn't say anything."

"Tonight? Oh, it's so hot! I don't know——" said Mrs. Ordway, irresolutely."

"Well, better make up your mind! You can't keep her waiting, you know," said Joe precise and fidgetty as usual.

In spite of the advice (also as usual!) they all hung undecided. "What did she *say,* anyhow, Joe?"

"Oh, *Lord!* Why, she wanted to know when we were going, and then she said Mr. Rudd had had to go already on account of business, and he's to meet her in New York. So she's all alone, and *then* she said she'd like us to come over. She said something about being just a table."

"Just a table? Count *me* out! *She* must have," said Juliet. "Boo-hoo! How terribly cut I feel!"

"Oh, no; five's a nice number for auction, there's always somebody to keep dummy company. No, Mrs. Rudd wouldn't leave you out intentionally in that pointed way," her mother said reprovingly, and looked at Ordway senior. "Well, there's nothing to do, and hardly any place to sit down here. Shall we go?"

"If you aren't too tired. But don't you really want to go, Juliet? I thought you said you'd like to go somewhere, if there were any place to go."

"I didn't mean go to play auction with Mrs. Rudd, though. She is the *punkest*——!"

"The game isn't sporty enough for Ju," her brother

suggested. "She likes action. Ten-cent points and plenty of pep—that's Ju!"

"Oh, *you*! Why, I never played for that much in my life! Ten cents would make an awfully big game. No, I meant I'd like a *real* date, you know, father, but anyhow I've just remembered I've got a date with myself. I've got to write a steamer-letter to Marion Macready. I ought to have done it before."

"Well then, I'll tell Mrs. Rudd *you* won't come. She's staying there at the telephone all this time!" said Joe, and he went off as the elder Joseph exclaimed over Juliet's last words.

"Ought to have done it before? I should think so! They sail Saturday, don't they? You can't get it off in time."

"Oh, yes, I can!" Juliet asserted competently; she was always quick, ready and resourceful. "It'll be only a line, you know, and I'll get Nichols to take it down to the village. They take up the mail at nine, and if it goes out tonight, it'll get there all right." She flew over to the bell; and then went and sat down at the writing-table and began rummaging out paper and a pen while she was speaking. "I shan't have to tip him for that, shall I, father?"

"Tip him? Tip who? Oh, Nichols? Suffering Moses, *no!* Why?"

"Well, I thought maybe—it's not exactly what he's hired for——" said Juliet, sitting with pen poised, and a doubtful eye on her father. "They all have such exalted notions. Oh, Sarah, tell Nichols I want to speak to him, will you?"

Mr. Ordway grunted a vigorous negative. "Nichols gets enough, he doesn't need any tips from *you,* anyhow. Somebody was saying to me the other day they under-

stood I had a perfect pearl of a chauffeur, and I told 'em pearl was right, he was a pearl of great price! Alice, you mean to walk, don't you? It's not worth while getting out a machine for that little distance—just to go down the hill and up again."

Nichols came to the door of the room. Mrs. Ordway in her lace wrap was waiting in the hall; Mr. Ordway was lighting a cigar; Joe sought among the disestablished odds and ends riding-crops, umbrellas, tennis-balls and what-not, for a flash-light he was wont to carry on these evening excursions; this was one of the rural fashions on the North Hill. They all heard Juliet speaking to the man.

"I'll have a letter ready directly, and I'll want you to take it down to Adams Road and mail it—will you, please? It has to be in the box before nine o'clock. Isn't there some short cut you can go?"

After a slight pause he answered: "Yes, Miss Ordway."

"Well, you'll surely get there by nine?"

There was another pause perceptibly longer; then Nichols said a little confusedly: "Why, yes, Miss Ordway, I—I c'n get there by nine. The—there's a path through Loring's I c'n take."

"That'll be all right then." They heard him go; Joe found his flashlight at last in the pocket of somebody's raincoat; and the family, minus Juliet, set out for the Rudd house.

The steamer-letter to Miss Macready was finished in a remarkably short space of time, and one of the maids brought it out to Nichols as he lounged in the servants' porch. He went down the road with it, whistling gently, and ever and anon referring to his watch. Nine o'clock and the short cut? Luther believed he knew what that

meant; he would have greatly admired his own perspicacity, had Juliet's not been obviously so superior. He shook his head, smiling to himself, wondering at and a little mystified by the thoroughness of her precautions. He would have thought she could make an appointment with him any time, anywhere; that it need only be a matter of a whisper or a scrawl on a bit of paper. It seemed to him that she gave unnecessary care and ingenuity to covering up tracks, eluding suspicions; but Luther readily conceded that she probably knew what she was about in her world which was not the same as his world. He addressed words of obloquy to himself, recalling his behaviour of that very afternoon and contrasting it with hers; a little more, and Four-Eyes—which was the unamiable descriptive epithet he applied to Joe Ordway—Four-Eyes would have got *on!*

He duly posted the letter, and came back at a pace somewhat less rapid than if he had been going to a fire, until he neared the hedge and stone wall of the afternoon's adventure. It wanted a good ten minutes of nine still. Luther slacked up, dawdled past the place, eyeing the path and bushes searchingly, dawdled back again. He did this half a dozen times, only desisting in a seizure of hysterical mirth at memories it aroused of his sojourn at Fort William. He struck a match and looking at his watch again for at least the twentieth time, discovered that the sentry performance had not consumed three minutes! He lit a cigarette, and settled himself under a tree—his bodily self, that is; for now his mind began to roam up and down in a labyrinth of uneasy conjecture. If, after all, this should not be the place she hinted at, then where, where in the name of something unnameable, was it? And if Juliet was waiting there while he waited here——! Luther had enough

imagination to vision the outcome. It would be the end; never again! No girl would stand for anything like that, let alone Juliet Ordway, he said to himself sapiently; it wouldn't make any difference whether she thought you had ditched her on purpose, or that you were just naturally a flat tire, she'd be done with you!

An automobile passed with a rush, stirring up the dust; then another and another. The succeeding silence deepened by contrast. A hot, languid air sighed across the honeysuckles bringing him their fragrance. He got up and strayed along the road in restlessness and suspense. Either she could not come, or had never intended to, or he had made that sickening mistake, or—— Luther caught his breath, glimpsing something white. He went over to the wall and stood looking up at her; he could have reached and clasped his hand around a slim ankle. She was in the same wisp of a dress, without even a scarf over her bare shoulders; he remembered the dimples in them as she bent over the table writing. There was light enough for each to see the other's features, though indistinctly.

"You're there!" said Juliet in a cautious voice. "I didn't know whether you understood——?"

"Yeh. I was sure you must mean here."

"Everybody has gone out. As soon as I found they were going I thought of this. It's not likely there'll be another chance, you know, and anywhere around the house wouldn't be safe."

"You don't aim t' stay up there on top of th' wall, do you?" said Luther.

"I can't get down—that is, not unless I scramble around in the grass and bushes——"

Luther moved back a step, spreading his arms. "Jump!"

Juliet hesitated. The action would be sufficiently symbolic; and perhaps the halt was for that one instant of calculation, that lightning-flash review of conventions that no woman ever forgets even in her wildest moment. Then she jumped, landing in a light heap against his breast.

After a minute she said: "This place really isn't safe either."

"Suits *me!*"

"Yes, but you aren't a bit careful. I don't believe men can be; they don't seem to think of things——"

"*Men,* huh? Seems 's if you knew a lot about 'em," said Luther alertly; his arm must have tightened around her, for she subdued an exclamation.

"*Oh!* The button on your top pocket is digging right into my cheek!"

"Yeh? Hurts, don't it? I've heard that 'hurt' stuff before. It don't go twice!"

"Well, you know you'll have to let me go right away, anyhow."

"You ain't hardly come yet," said Luther. "Aw, please!"

"But I *can't* stay. They may all come back any minute."

"Naw, they won't. You can think up somepin t' tell 'em, anyhow."

"Well, you don't know how hard that is. This afternoon——! I had to tell the greatest string of stories."

"Bet they was good ones!"

"It's easy enough for *you.* You weren't a bit of good," said Juliet accusingly.

"I—I guess I got kinda excited. I—I can't help it when—when you're around—I——!"

"I don't believe you *can* help it," Juliet said, assum-

ing an air of detached observation. "Right now your heart's beating like everything. It feels so *queer!*"

"Uh-huh? It would feel a whole lot queerer if I was holding Mrs. Grace or some of them other old dodos she has around. Gosh! They're a fierce bunch!" said Luther, with feeling. "I don't know how I stood 'em."

He felt rather than heard her half-stifled laughter. "Oh, you *are* so funny!"

"Yeh, I was expectin' t' hear that; had m' ear kinda stretched f'r it. You aren't funny. You're pretty! You got th' prettiest hair————!"

"Don't! You're mussing it all up! Somebody might —don't! I've got to go now, anyhow."

"Aw, please! I gotta wait till September, and *then* some, maybe. Aw, I ain't kissed you but once yet, an'— an' you ain't kissed me at all!"

"Why, I don't *have* to, do I? You can't make me, anyhow!"

Something about the spirit of this speech or in her tone rather than the actual words seemed to Luther an outrage on manhood. He relinquished her at once, stepping back and folding his arms with a gesture unconsciously dramatic. The young fellow's grace of movement was entirely natural and spontaneous; he had no idea of striking attitudes. "Naw, you don't *have* to," he said severely. "I don't want no girl t' kiss me that don't care enough for me t' do it her own self. An' I wouldn't *make* you if I could. I ain't no roughneck!"

They stood apart for a moment, Juliet eyeing him. "Well, good-bye!" she said at length.

"Goo'-bye!" said Luther grimly. He turned away.

"Wait a minute!"

All at once in a dizzy ecstasy, he felt her arms, those arms of his desire, enlacing his neck; her lips against

his were as delicate as the petal of a flower; it was a very wraith of a caress, fleeting yet ardent. Another second, and with half-frightened, half-mischievous laughter, she had flashed away from him, flying towards the path. Luther could not trust himself to follow, to overtake her.

## VIII

That genial Philistine—as many people considered him—Mr. Daniel Levin, in his going to and fro, found occasion to visit the city again towards the middle of October, some three or four weeks after that first time. In strict truthfulness, Daniel made the occasion; happening to be in Chicago, he just ran down over the week-end, he said, unblushingly proclaiming the attractions of the North Hill flesh-pots. The big man had friends everywhere or friends of friends; but his intimacies were best represented by Donelson Meigs. They were nearly of an age, and Daniel had certain vagrant tastes that made him welcome in the sea-ports of Bohemia where Don had spent most of his life—not always in as reputable pursuits as his accredited one of painting, it was rumored. That sort of story, however, never yet set society seriously against a man; and if Mr. Levin had heard or knew personally anything about it, he did not allow it to prejudice him. Live and let live was his possibly Philistine motto; and he might have added something to the effect that we are none of us saints had he been given to inexpensive moralizing. He called up the Meigs house from his hotel; and receiving a warm invitation to come out, replied roundly that that was just what he was fishing for!

"No, no, not to *stay!* I'll keep my room here," he added with laughter that fairly shook the telephone-booth. "I haven't quite the cheek to brace you for board and lodging both. . . . No, that's all right, Don, I'm just as much obliged, but my mail's being sent here,

you know. . . . Hey? Yes, I've got 'em, I always carry some clothes and two or three sticks—a driver anyhow—when I'm on one of these trips, just on the chance of getting a game. . . . Two o'clock? All right! No, don't mind! I know the way now."

He went out to the Hill, and to the club, noting not without some aesthetic appreciation that autumn had at last arrived and in very picturesque and royal state in this mid-western country. There was a strong blue sky; frost-burned maples, sumach and Virginia creeper touched up the landscape with vehement color; the North Hill gardens displayed a final brightness of cosmos and asters; the sun travelled in a diminished arc, bringing back the old wonder of the shortening days. There would not be more than time for the eighteen holes, he reflected, looking off across the rolling links that were very gay and active this fine weather. Every wind brought down a shower of leaves from branches already bare enough for him to get a much better view of the lofty, retired houses than had been possible the time befor at twilight among their then well-clad groves. Not much of a place now for spooning rendezvous, Levin said to himself, smiling at the recollection of that couple he had all but charged into on his last walk. The nights were waxing cool, anyhow; Romeo would get a red nose in the nipping air!

Don Meigs came out on the porch to greet him; and at the same moment an automobile went backing and filling into a space in the semi-circle of them drawn up facing the club doors, and there descended a pudgy young man who came up with a diffident, almost furtive eye on the other two. He wore spectacles; and he stumbled over the top step, smiling and reddening when Don spoke to him: "Hello, Joe!"

"Hello!" croaked Joe, nervously.

"I don't believe you've ever met. This is my friend Levin—from New York. Dan, Mr. Joseph Ordway—Joseph junior, that is."

"I should have guessed he wasn't anybody's senior; not by many years, anyhow," said Levin and they shook hands, Joe turning a deeper pink still, pleased and flustered at the older men's notice. Not only Don Meigs but his family, his friends and everything else that was his came in for Joe's loyal admiration. Ordinarily he might not have fancied much Levin's style which, for that matter, was not markedly prepossessing. Daniel was upwards of six feet in height, with the brawn of a prize-fighter; his strongly-lined face did not lack sense, humor and kindliness, but the features seemed to have been assembled without much regard for looks. Seen together, he and Meigs suggested a comic-cartoon representation of substance and shadow, so light, quick and gracious was the latter's figure by comparison, so baffling his face of a bored Mercutio. They differed so physically that one involuntarily attributed to them corresponding differences of mind and character, and the friendship afforded a perennial topic for comment and wonder. Joe, who with all the desire in the world somehow had never known or learned how to make friends, beheld them with unconsciously pathetic interest.

He followed them at a timid distance into the locker-room, and lingered over his own change of clothes while theirs was being accomplished; then, in a panic lest he be thought to be doing what he actually was doing, namely: hanging around in the hope of further notice, he was rushing out to get a caddy and start off ahead of them when Don said: "By yourself?"

"Y-yes—that is—yes, I'm by myself——"

"Come along with us?"

"Why—er—all right!"

"Maybe we can get hold of another man; foursome's always a better game, I think, and then I want Dan to meet our people, anyhow," said Don hospitably bent on entertaining his friend. But it appeared that all of the golfers were out already, and the tea-ing, auction-ing, or merely loafing constituency had not yet gathered—a relief to young Ordway, however much of a disappointment to the other man. Joe's game was no worse than the average, but before an audience shyness crippled him.

"You wouldn't think it would be so quiet on a day like this," said Levin, noting the deserted porches as they passed on their way to the tee. "Haven't people got back *yet?* You were telling me when I was here last month that nobody was home."

"Oh, they're almost all here now. Look at the links! We'll find the house full when we come in."

"Some of them have gone to the races," said Joe. "It's not so popular as it used to be, still people do make up parties and go, now and then."

Levin looked at him with an inquiring grin. *"'Not popular?'"* he said. "Why, the whole place is full of sports going! Down-town you couldn't throw a stone without hitting an automobile-load of 'em! They've got placards with "This car to the races" stuck all over every vehicle in sight down to the wheelbarrows! *"'Not popular!'"* Why, you don't know what's going on in your own town!"

"That's the hoi polloi, the profane vulgar, the proletariat, in short, the class which theoretically doesn't exist in this ideal democracy, Daniel, my son," said Don.

"People you know don't go any more. It's the thousands nobody knows that go."

"Oh, I see. Where is Utopia? Where the race-track is, I mean?"

"Oh, *that* Utopia! Why it's in Kentucky, right across the river. They have six weeks' racing every fall and spring. They run trains out every half-hour or so, loaded to the roofs with people nobody knows."

"Well, races are a good deal of fun," said Daniel, preparing his tee. "There doesn't seem to be any reason why they should go out of style—unless it's because everybody is doing his own speeding nowadays."

"Something in that theory."

Levin drove, backing up no inconsiderable skill with so formidable an equipment of muscle, as to call forth prideful expletives from his caddy roosting on the rising ground between two and three hundred yards down the green. "You got Fatty, ain't you?" the young gentleman inquired of a freckled and snub-nosed compatriot, carrying young Ordway's bag. "He's a bird!"

"Aw, he c'n line 'em out, too, if he don't git scairt. Ye—*ow!* Looka that, now!"

In fact, Joe made a very creditable drive; and, following it up with a couple of lucky iron shots, succeeded in halving the hole with the visitor. Two or three more were disposed of in much the same fashion; Don Meigs, observing it, felicitated himself on having had the impulse to ask Joe to play; his own game was too erratic to make it interesting for so steady a player as Levin. To be sure, Ordway was a rather nervous, self-conscious young fellow, and his manner was a little unfortunate, Donelson said to himself, but he was all right when you got to knowing him.

For this desirable result, to wit: getting to know peo-

ple, there is nothing to equal playing a game with them. By the time the trio reached the tenth hole, everybody was on the jolliest possible terms with everybody else, and Joe Ordway was having the happiest afternoon of his recollection since he was a small boy being taken to the circus! It was not merely that he was in the coveted society of that object of his admiration, Mr. Meigs; Joe found that he liked this friend of Don's exceedingly. The big man was so companionable, hearty and direct; he won or lost with so good a spirit; his manner to the caddies was so pleasing; he took a joke with so unaffected a bonhomie. Moreover, it turned out—as it almost invariably did wherever Daniel went—that they had some mutual acquaintances; and, weaving backwards and forwards about the links, encountering other players, there was no difficulty about placing Mr. Levin for them in the introductions. He was a friend of the Marshall Cooks', he knew the Rudds, the Stillmans; it was enough. Joe began to revolve asking them to dinner, but suffered a return of shyness. The trouble was his mother was still away, the house and in particular the table showed the lack of her competent and charming presence. No use counting on Juliet; he did not know where she was two-thirds of the time. All the girls had so much to do, so many places to go, and Ju was probably dated up solid for days ahead, the brother thought, not without pride.

The club-house, as they neared it, wore decidedly a livelier air, as Don had prophesied. Dusk was coming on apace, it began to be chilly in the hollows, there was a blue haze banking up around the horizon; but the porches were full of movement and color still, and as the players came by in groups, people called out mock applause and waggishly solicitous inquiries. Levin got

a glimpse of all manner of striped, plaided, fringed, shapeless outing-costumes, of a liberal array of fantastically shod and stockinged feet, no two pairs alike, of pretty faces above wreath-like rolls of fur. In the dressing-room players conclamantly accounted for the poor showing made in the afternoon's game, half a dozen flasks circulated, men shouted in the shower. He began to feel very much at home. They all three got dressed and went upstairs fresh and tingling from the cold water, and met some more people; and Donelson asked Joe to dine with them.

"Well, I was going to get you to come over to us, only my mother's not home——" the younger man began confusedly, getting red and looking worried behind his spectacles as was his wont. "And then I thought maybe you'd have something to eat here with me——?"

"No, that's all right, Joe, but *my* mother's expecting Levin, so we've got to go home anyhow——"

"I'll take you up on that invitation another time, Mr. Ordway," said Levin, with a passing wonder what it was about the other that made him occasionally so fatiguing; he was really a harmless fellow, he—— and here Mr. Levin broke off his reverie to stare helplessly at someone who had just entered the room or whom, at least, he had just that minute seen. "Who's that girl—that fair one?" he said in openly admiring curiosity; and was ludicrously put out of countenance when she nodded and flashed a smile towards them.

"That's my sister," said Joe.

*"Oh!"* Daniel recovered himself, hastily removing his eyes from her to look with amused yet sympathetic understanding into his companion's face where an immense pride struggled with the iron conventions in which he had been trained. "I'm afraid I was staring," said Levin

in humility. "I couldn't help it—but I don't know what she'll think!"

It was Joe's turn to smile. "She won't think anything, she's too used to it," said he a little arrogantly. "Here, I want to introduce you."

Juliet gave him her hand, and looked at him with her extraordinary eyes; and Daniel Levin remarked inwardly that he had never seen a more beautiful creature. It was a relief to find that she had abundant poise and self-possession, too, unlike her brother who fidgetted incessantly and seemed so uncertain of himself. There was some talk; Joe told her in his unwittingly consequential way that he would not be at home that evening, except to dress, he was going to dinner with Don Meigs. He gulped and stuttered over the name; he had never called the other Don Meigs in his presence before. But Don did not notice it; he only thought, as he had already a hundred times; how odd it was that Joe Ordway should be apparently incapable of saying or doing anything in a plain, straightforward way, though he was essentially a plain, straightforward man!

"Well, what time do you think you will get home, Joe? If mother were here, she'd be sitting up for you, but *I* shan't if you're late."

"Why, Miss Ordway, do you think we're going to lead Joe into evil ways?"

"What do you call evil ways?" said Juliet with a barely perceptible emphasis on the pronoun that caused Levin to wonder privately if she had ever heard the story about Donelson Meigs and the manicure-girl? It was ten years ago, of course; still stories of that nature have a way of surviving; and even girls as young as this one knew all about everything these days.

"Joe always feels so responsible for me I want to

show him what it's like," said Joe's sister with a kind of innocently malicious twinkle in the green eyes, and she forthwith began in an artificial manner that they guessed was a caricature and a pretty stinging one, to judge by Joe's expressions: "You ought to be in before half-past eleven, Joseph. Staying out later than that *doesn't look well!* I know a good deal more about this than you do——"

"Oh, let up!" grumbled Joe. "You know I don't talk to you that way——" He was divided between annoyance and an inconsistent relish of Juliet's deviltry—as he considered it. She looked so pretty and provoking; that big fellow from New York was manifestly so struck by her. Damn it, a man likes to have a sister he can show off, Joe thought, savoring the ornamental profanity he would never have uttered aloud; the young man was clean-mouthed and clean-minded. He took Juliet home in the little car with the other two men hanging on, one on either running-board, as far as the Meigs gate. They dropped off, some farewells and see-you-laters were shouted, Miss Ordway tossed them a last brilliant smile; they walked up to the house, and Levin said: "What a stunning little beauty she is!"

"Yes. I think she's bright, too. You don't expect that somehow."

"Wonderful eyes!"

"Yes—but put not your trust in 'em, Daniel!"

"Hey? Why, she wasn't thinking of using 'em on *me!* I must be twice her age, and I daresay she regards me as having one foot in the grave."

"That's no protection. She might take a whirl at you for the novelty of it. I say, put not your trust in 'em!"

"Why, Don, I thought this vamp business was all out of date. I didn't know the girls practiced it any more."

"Oh, that probably all depends on circumstances and individuals and so forth. The fact is, there are some things that never go out."

Levin chuckled. "That is a profound truth. Did I tell you about the couple I nearly ran into in the dark, coming away from your house——?" He went on with the recital to the huge amusement of the other man. "There they were in a tight clinch! *Wow!*"

"What'd you do?"

"Made all the racket I could, of course. And of course we didn't look as we passed by, so as to spare mutual embarrassment. But the old-time methods were in full swing, Donelson, and I doubt if they've ever been much improved on!"

Joe dressed himself and set out for the Meigs house in a pleased flutter which he knew to be more or less ridiculous, but could not quite overcome, for all that. He was anticipating wonders in the line of entertainment—entertainment to which, by the way, he did not suppose himself capable of contributing. "I can't keep up with Don Meigs," thought the young fellow humbly; "and I know I'm not a stimulating companion for him. But he isn't expecting anything of me. After all this friend of his, this Levin, isn't exactly the kind you strike sparks out of, either; and Mrs. Meigs is a lovely old lady, but nobody ever knew her to scintillate. I guess I can hold up my end as far as they are concerned."

As it turned out, this dinner even after the cocktails, and later when the champagne began, was conversationally a very ordinary affair, without much scintillating from any quarter. Mrs. Meigs lamented the lack of young ladies to Levin as she had on that first occasion. "He seems to have a habit of dropping down suddenly like this, so you don't have time to get people," she ex-

plained to Joe. "Everybody always has so many engagements, and some people don't like last-minute invitations. Still, I can't imagine why Don didn't try to get your sister to come, too, as long as you were all over there."

"Why, that's awfully kind of you, Mrs. Meigs, but I don't believe Juliet would have come anyway. I asked her if she was going out tonight, and she said no, she'd turned down two or three invitations, because father would be so lonesome without anybody there."

"Oh, isn't that sweet? They aren't generally so thoughtful."

"Well, Ju's had a lot of going-out, you know. This is her third year, and I shouldn't wonder if she were getting a little tired of it," said the brother deprecatingly. He had been somewhat surprised himself at Juliet's decision. Jones filled the glasses again, and Mr. Levin remarked that the drought hadn't struck the North Hill yet!

"There was plenty of stuff over there at the club this afternoon, I noticed. Everybody was carrying a bottle."

"And subsequently, without doubt, some of 'em carried a jag! But you have to take it with you, Dan. You're not allowed to keep it in your locker."

Levin laughed; and being a big man, he had a big laugh. The glassware on the table tinkled in response to that jovial and mellow thunder. "Keep it in your locker? Why, who wants to? My guess would be that you wouldn't keep it long! Maybe this is a good community, though, where you don't have booze-thieves. Yet I seem to recall having seen in the newspapers——"

"Set your mind at rest!" said Don. "Nobody's got anything on us in that respect We have bandits and bootleggers and moonshine stills and all the rest of it.

We are rolling up a splendid percentage of deaths from alcoholism; our list of drug-addicts will bear comparison with that of any city of equal size in the United States; you can get anything you want to drink, anywhere; everything is very complete and up to the minute!"

"Well, a man may not have any moral right to drink himself to death, but I've noticed that it's generally the more undesirable members of society that do it, anyway. It seems as if a better or more humane manner of disposing of them could scarcely be devised. They die happy, and everybody's glad they're gone," Levin said with so much gravity that Mrs. Meigs thought he was in earnest, and immediately assumed the attitude drilled into women of her generation, of sitting devoutly at the feet of masculine wisdom.

"I suppose the prohibition people wouldn't listen to any argument like that, though, would they, Mr. Levin? Everyone says they're so terribly narrow!"

"I'm afraid they wouldn't," said the big man, without a smile.

"What this country needs is a little less good morals and a little more good taste," Don said. "Morals and moral systems are unhandy anyhow; they're always getting in the way of liberal government and balling things up. Take the Ten Commandments——"

"Take them by all means. Nobody wants to keep them," said Levin with his laugh. But the other went on vigorously.

"Take the Ten Commandments, and document for document, I'd rather have the Declaration of Independence. It's been of far more practical benefit."

"You'd have trouble proving that to the brethren."

"Why, I'll prove it now, Daniel. In this part of the

world we can get along perfectly well without the Ten Commandments. In point of fact, most of us do! But we can't get along without the Statutes of the State of Ohio."

Mrs. Meigs looked troubled; and Joe, though he believed himself in the company of wits and was concentrating every faculty on remembering what was said, could not be sure of the character of this statement, the more so as Levin wore momentarily a doubtful and speculative expression. Then he wagged his head at his friend. "Donelson, I don't believe that's a piece of solid philosophy. I think it's just one of those cheap, clever-sounding things you say! The trouble is that right off I can't think up anything equally cheap and clever-sounding to come back at you with!"

It happened to be very near the time his sister had mentioned in her teasing, when Joe reached home, and he laughed to realize it as he was fitting his latch-key. He was in a good temper with himself and all the world. "It's the end of a perfect day!" he thought with fresh amusement, quoting the hackneyed line. The house was dark except for the vestibule lantern; everybody must have gone to bed, though, as young men's hours go, he was not getting in late. However, he heard a door somewhere downstairs shut as he was taking off his light overcoat in the hall, and after an instant located the sound as coming from the living-room; someone in the establishment was up still. And true enough, as he sauntered in the direction, a tenuous streak of light lay across the threshold, and entering he saw the tall-stemmed lamp by the fireplace glowing dimly under its heavy shade, and there was Juliet just bolting the terrace doors.

"Hello! Locking up?"

"Oh, that you, Joe?"

"Yes. What's the matter? Can't you fasten that? Here, let me——!"

"No, it's all right now," said Juliet, a little breathless from the exertion perhaps, standing, backed up against the door, looking at him and about the room with her casual yet alert glance. "The others are all locked," she added quickly as he made a motion towards them.

"Father gone to bed?"

"Yes, an hour or so ago."

"I thought everybody was upstairs, it was so quiet."

"Well, I was just sitting here. The fire was so nice I hated to leave it."

At the moment the fire was not particularly nice; indeed it was not much more than a mound of dully crimsoned ashes, Joe saw, as he walked over to it. "It's nearly out!" he said. "Feels chilly in here to me."

"I was just beginning to be sleepy," Juliet said as if in explanation. She abandoned her post by the door and came and stood near, watching him absently as he lit a cigarette. "Have a good time, Joe?"

"Yes. Bully! I'm going out with those fellows again tomorrow. Be out all day, I guess."

Juliet, who was straying towards the door, halted, then turned back, still with idle movements, and lapsed slowly down on the broad, padded arm of the nearest chair. *"All day?"* she echoed. "To play golf, you mean? Don't you *ever* get tired?"

"No, we're not going to the club. That was suggested, of course, but Don thought it might be fun, for once, to go over to Utopia. We can play all day Sunday, if we like."

"Utopia?" said Juliet meditatively.

"Yes. Make up a party—only it's my treat. I'm going to take 'em. It's the Commercial Club Stakes to-

morrow, they advertise. There're some pretty good horses entered. We thought we'd go anyhow, and show Dan—that's this Mr. Levin, you know," said Joe rather importantly. "We thought we'd show him what the Kentucky side of the river is like."

"All day?" said Juliet again. "It doesn't take all day to run one race, does it?"

"No, no! They have at least half a dozen events, and it doesn't begin till around two o'clock," said her brother in impatient pity. "But of course that means all the rest of the afternoon; we'd be very late getting home, so we're going somewhere for dinner."

"Men have an awfully good time," said Juliet enviously.

"Well, there was something said about getting some of the girls. But—oh, well—I don't know—I'm not so keen about taking girls to a place like Utopia," Joe said fastidiously. "If *everybody* went, it would be all right. But——" he moved his head negatively. "Too much mix. We finally decided it had better be all men. You made a big hit with Levin, though, Ju," he finished by way of consolation.

"Oh, stuff!" said Juliet. But she dimpled, perhaps a little pleased in spite of herself. "Well——" she got up, yawning. *"All day!* Better get all the sleep you can; it's going to be rather strenuous." She was moving away, but paused again at the door, evidently struck by another thought. "Goodness, Joe, I hope you weren't planning to take Nichols?"

"Why, no, not unless there's no good place over there to leave the car. I thought I'd find out from somebody that had been. Why? You want him? I was going to take the big car."

"Well, you leave me something to get around in any-

how; I'll be sure to want to go somewhere. Why, what I meant about Nichols is that it's his Saturday off! I just happened to think."

"Oh, well, that settles it! I'll drive myself. Can't interfere with Nichols, of course!" Joe remarked satirically. "We must all unite to make home happy for the servants!"

# IX

Men may die and worms may eat them, but not for love! So Luther, although strongly disposed, during the first days after the departure of the family, to mope about and feel sorry for himself and indulge in gloomy visionings connected with jumping in the river, ended by settling down philosophically to await their return. And it must be admitted that he suffered no alarming loss of sleep or appetite, and managed by and large to put in the time agreeably. The fact is that, no matter how hopeless and heartbreaking the situation should have appeared, he was in reality not at all hopeless, anything but broken-hearted. For these buccaneering expeditions into the *Pays du Tendre* the main qualification is a lively conceit of oneself; and Luther was not without justification for his. The young man, from his own point of view, had every reason to believe that he had made a conquest; to be sure, it was not the same degree and kind of conquest as he had made heretofore in the amatory field, but that, he told himself, was because of the difference between Juliet Ordway and the other girls.

For there *was* a difference, he inwardly declared; Juliet was a "society girl," and you might say what you chose, there *was* a difference between "society girls" and the rest of them! Luther recalled with contempt certain cynical aphorisms current amongst that group of chauffeurs at Schulte's in the old days, reciting that in the dark all cats are grey, and other versions of the Gallic opinion that *la plus belle fille au monde ne peut donner que*

*ce qu' elle a.* Those fellows knew a lot about it, he mused, sarcastic, complacent and superior, between scorn of them and pity for the trusting ignoramus he had been. The chances were that not one of them had ever been looked at or spoken to by such a girl as Juliet in his whole life, where he, Luther Nichols——! No difference? The very feeling of her skin was different, so soft, so smooth, so fine-grained with nothing licked over it, no smears of red paint, no powder thick enough to write your name in! Her hair lay on her head in its own loose, silky waves and wrinkles; it did not look as if it had been carved out of wood and finished off with a coat of high-gloss varnish. No difference? The way she wore her clothes and spoke and walked and laughed was different, the very ideas in her head were different! And this difference in her favor, Luther discerned, did not result wholly from exceptional beauty and cleverness; it was characteristic, more or less, of all the "society girls." In his observation, although there was not one of them to compare with her for looks and wits, they were all different in the same inexplicable fashion, no more to be lumped with the femininity he had known than if they had been inhabitants of another planet. The confusing thing was that it was not a matter of money, that sovereign transmuting agency; for give the others, give Ellie, for instance, all the money in the world, she would still be unable to surmount that indefinable difference. Luther considered this phenomenon a good deal, off and on, without reaching any satisfactory conclusion.

Nowadays he felt rather sorry for Ellie. Having practically nothing to do, he must in conscience and if only for the looks of it, spend more time with her, down on Amelia Street and elsewhere, whenever she could be

away from her hats, her cold cream; and her life seemed to him increasingly drab and dreary. She was making money, the note to Federmann was nearly paid off, the little shop, even in the dull summer season, had enough custom from buyers of *Janice* to more than offset the somewhat diminished profits from the millinery and knicknacks. It was passing strange to Luther that now when she was as she herself said, almost "out of the woods," assured of at least a modest success, Ellie should still think and talk business, get up and go to bed with business, all but eat and drink business. She still spent hours calculating expenses and returns, still would not allow herself a day off, much less a real vacation, and for a crowning stroke of penny-squeezing economy, as it appeared to Luther, dismissed one of her shop-women about the first of August, kept the other on half-time, and herself assumed their duties, alleging that there was not enough work to justify paying out so much in wages.

"There ain't any business is going to run itself, while you set back and let it run," she said in reply to his not too energetic remonstrances. "You got to stay with it every minute. Never you mind, Loot. You don't know nothing about it, so you better let it alone."

It was the truth. Luther's money came and went so easily, he had insensibly fallen into the habit of regarding it as flowing from an inexhaustible source; old age, sickness, ill-luck, higher gains and ambitions had all alike somehow vanished from his ken. He had no other desire or expectation than that of remaining forever what he was. Good enough is good enough. Ellie depressed as much as she bored him with her ceaseless activity, her insatiable ideals; she seemed to be deliberately and ingeniously making life hard, and in the circumstances he would have liked to see her as happily irresponsible as

himself. Poor Ellie! He thought she was beginning to look a good deal older; her face had lost its freshness; even the decorations she applied—on a base of *Janice*—could not rejuvenate it, and the professional suavity of her expression enlivened by more extensive dental work than formerly alternately annoyed and distressed him. Juliet Ordway's teeth were perfect, like two rows of little white grains of corn, he thought fondly; she had the most enchanting dimples; there never were such eyelashes, so long and thick, the upper ones curling back ever so little——

"Say, Loot, you must be thinking of something nice to be kinda smiling to yourself that way," said Ellie, eyeing him with sudden challenge. "Your pipe's gone out. I'm telling you, as long as you don't seem to have noticed it."

Luther roused himself with a start, trying to meet her eyes unconcernedly, the while he wondered what he had betrayed, and whether he looked as guilty as he felt. "I—I was just—I just remembered a story one of th' fellas was tellin' me th' other day—kinda funny story ——"

"What was it about?" Ellie demanded promptly.

"Aw, I guess you wouldn't wanta hear it, Ellie. 'Tain't—'tain't——"

"Oh, I s'pose it's one of your men stories," said Ellie, her suspicions, if she had any, all at once magically allayed, her interest diverted in the most astonishing manner! "Go on 'n' tell me, Loot. We're married."

"Naw, I do' wanta. You wouldn't unnerstan' anyhow. You—you ain't ever heard these kind of words—anyways I hope you ain't!" said Luther more glibly. "Th' words is what makes it funny."

She seemed to be satisfied; at any rate she was si-

lenced; and he had a moment of profound wonder. If telling salacious stories—only Luther's adjective was not quite so handsome—would put her off the track, why, nothing could be easier! But who would ever have supposed that an honest woman like Ellie would be so eager to hear them? On examination, the device appeared rather too precarious; it could not be relied on day after day to turn Ellie from her jealous uneasiness. Boxes of candy, trips to the moving-picture theatres, cabaret-suppers commended themselves more to the masculine intelligence; so Luther was prodigal with them and other as substantial proofs of devotion. No one could suspect of inconstancy a man who was so diligent in taking his wife about and spending money on her; besides these generous attentions propped up his self-esteem, rehabilitated him in the eyes of conscience. He was making the ancient mistake of over-acting a part intrinsically too obvious, of setting up the logical defense against an entirely illogical attack. Ellie would have been jealous of a Saint Anthony; but a Saint Anthony would have resignedly let her be jealous! She took a kind of unhappy pride in showing off her husband's devotion before her world; but in her secret heart she trusted him no more than she ever had.

He passed as much of the time as possible with Roy; Roy was a tremendous relief from the strain of Ellie. He never asked any questions, never interrupted Luther's sentimental reveries, never needed entertainment. He worked during working hours, and rested during the hours of rest, like a sensible human being. The two friends would sit together a whole Sunday morning, smoking pipe after pipe in mute companionship; sometimes they went to the ball-game, and once or twice out to the country to fish; but a favorite recreation with Roy

which Luther eventually adopted was to go down Western Avenue when market was in progress, and pass the time of day with "th' folks." As a matter of fact, Roy had no "folks," but Deercreek remembered and took an interest in this son of its soil, still; and as for the young man himself, he had never given up that dream of some time going back to the little barren hillside farm of his birth and boyhood, though ten years had gone by and it was as far from realization as ever. Luther, for his part, had not been near Western Avenue for two or three years, except to drive down and stay with the car on the outskirts of the market while Mrs. Grace's house-man or the Ordway ladies went exploring among the stalls. Once in a while he saw Hermann; the older Nicholses no longer came in town these days.

"They's been kinda changes," Roy warned him on the first expedition. "Zettels they broke up 'n' moved away, all but th' oldest girl, that there jimber-jawed one, remember her? She married Ben Hagedorn—second wife. Them Hunks is there still, on'y they's a whole lot more of 'em, come over from th' old country, or might be th' young ones is just natcherlly growed up 'n' married 'n' raised whalin' big families. Anyways I never see anything like it, they's more Hunks than anybody else, seems like! Batchygloopos 're there still, but they don't stand on market no more; they got a store. Tony's th' one that runs it, I think, but they're all in there workin' just like they alluz useta was. They don't seem near so Eyetalian like they useta, even Tony. He don't talk so dago now, an' them younger ones, you wouldn' hardly know they wasn't born 'n' raised t' talk United States just like you or I. I alluz kinda liked Batchgloopos, dago 'n' all."

"Same here!" said Luther warmly. If they were changed and for the better, so was he; and he was not averse to parading his loftier estate before these old-time acquaintances.

Western Avenue itself had scarcely altered a feature since his earliest recollections of it; perhaps there were fewer feed-stores, and the blacksmiths had gone over, almost in a body, to automobile repairing; Luther was wondering where the boys took their teams to stable them nowadays, when the sight of many more Ford cars than horse vehicles backed up along the curbs answered him. But there were still the weatherbeaten farm women and men attended by retinues of gawky, half-grown boys and girls; the same not unpleasantly acrid odour of pickles and sauerkraut and green onions pricked the nostrils, mingled with others as familiar of tar and fish and something alleged to be near-beer—— "But if it is, then I ain't never smelled th' real stuff!" Luther said to himself with a grin. Along the sidewalks to the rear of the stands you might behold and eke stumble over the same tottering stacks of tinware and baskets, the same faggots of rose-bushes, or grape-stocks dug up for transplanting; and underfoot was the same repellent litter necessitating more careful walking for a spick-and-span North Hill chauffeur than it had in the old days for a country clodhopper in overalls and clay-weighted boots. Luther threaded his way through in Roy's wake, identifying or being identified by people here and there, a process which, somewhat to his surprise, was accompanied by a certain warming of the heart. The old, half-forgotten friends were still friends; he was touched and amused and secretly not a little flattered by their frank comments, the stop-at-nothing curiosity of their questions, the naïve ignorance every word betrayed. Once he

had been as green as that; and doubtless he too would have stared his eyes out at the stylish uniformed figure, and would have wanted to know how much he got paid, and what the hours were, and whether the help ate by themselves or sat right down to the first table with the folks! Roy's progress created no such sensation; but life in town, even adventure and experience overseas with the army, had wrought no change in Roy. He might have come in from Deercreek with a wagon-load of garden-truck in the morning with the rest of them; his jokes, his gossip, his by-words were still theirs, and he was as much of a walking compendium of affairs and events on the Pike as if he had never left it.

In due time they arrived at the Bacciagalupo establishment; and there among slanted bins of peaches and melons, barrels of nice, pinky new potatoes and green ruches of kale, were the entire family in a varied assortment of ages and sizes, as erstwhile, although most of the set Luther had known must have grown up and dispersed during these intervening years. He could not be sure of any of them except Tony, who recognized him on the instant with a shout of welcome. "Allo, Lutie! How was tha' boy, eh?" He seized Luther's hand, thumped him on the back, then held him off and swept a glance of fervent Latin appreciation over him from head to foot, accompanying it with a clicking noise between his tongue and teeth implying approval and good-humored envy. "Some swell shuff, eh? Got all th' res' beat a block!"

"Aw, g'wan! How's ever'thing, anyways, Tony? Breakin' pretty good f'r you?"

Tony nodded in sudden pleasant gravity. He had put on flesh, and his strong, swarthy Italian face, though as

yet without lines, had acquired a maturity of expression that made him seem older than Luther; in fact they were nearly of an age. "Yaas. Me, I am in bus'ness for my own self now." He waved a large gesture around the place. "Pretty nice-a, eh, Lutie? Ziss my wife! Nannie, meet my frien' Loot Nichols."

Nannie was very evidently "United States," a chunky little woman with a coiffure suggesting at least two hours' industry with the comb and curling-tongs, an embroidered chiffon waist, and her feet crowded into a pair of agonizingly high-heeled pumps; in common with the other petticoated Bacciagalupos, she presented a striking contrast to the pretty, dark-eyed Italian girls of Luther's recollection, slouching about in flat list slippers, red shawls and gold earrings. But Mrs. Tony, he noted, was as emphatically "on the job" as they had been. At the moment she was waiting on a customer; she turned her head with a nod and smile of mechanical politeness: "Pleased t' meetcha, Mr. Nichols!" and went on keeping tab of the purchases on the side of a paper bag; but she took another look at Luther in a second.

"Heard they give you th' War Cross, Tony."

"Yass. I got it put away," said Tony, and changed the subject precipitately. "Where you workin', Loot?"

"North Hill."

"Good job, I guess yass? I seen you drivin' once."

"You *did?* Where?"

"Down-town. Mebbe I wouldn' notice on'y tha' there little lemon-hair blon' she was in th' auto. Thass same one, I mean."

Luther stared in dismay, the color climbing to his very temples. Lemon-haired blonde? But it was impossible that Tony Bacciagalupo could know or suspect anything; there was actually nothing to know or suspect,

he realized in a flash of reflection. Yet his sense of secrecy had taken alarm; he listened to the other's talk in uncomfortable suspense.

"Thass tha' same girl tha' come-a buyin' mushmelons one time, remember? She takin' you for one of us. Thass w'y I remember her. 'N' she's some-a queen, too, Loot!"

Illumination encompassed Luther—an illumination that well-nigh dazzled him. He marvelled that he had not remembered and identified her himself; to have forgotten those eyes, that hair, that matchless complexion seemed to him now little short of criminal; but he could have breathed a devout thanksgiving that she, on her side, had not remembered him as he was then!

"Don't you rec'lec?" Tony insisted. "I usta keed you 'bout makin' a 'it with her.'

"Oh, sure, yes, I rec'lect. I couldn't think what you was talkin' about f'r a minute, though," said Luther, recovering self-possession. "I'm drivin' f'r those people. Th' name's Ordway."

"Well, thass kinda funny, ain't it? After aw' tha' time. I know her right off, though."

Here Mrs. Bacciagalupo, having disposed of her client, came and joined them; and she gave Luther another up-and-down survey, accounting for it immediately with a rather conscious air and simper. "I expect you think I'm kinda shy and backwards—nit! Thing is my sister she works at your wife's—you're that Nichols, ain't you? Th' one that's got the hat-store? Uh-huh, I was sure you was. Well, my sister she works there and she told me about seein' you."

Luther expressed a suitable interest, explaining that he didn't go to the store very often; it wasn't much of a place for a man, and those young ladies behind the coun-

ter he was sort of scared of. Which one was Mrs. Tony's sister?

"Oh, she ain't one of them salesladies. She just cleans," said Mrs. Bacciagalupo simply. "Mrs. Nichols has her to come in reg'lar for the floor 'n' cases 'n' all, you know. She told me about seein' you. Then Tony he told me you was old friends."

Both men proclaimed their old friendship with warmth; and then, as more custom came in, Luther, being an ancient market-stander himself, felt that it was time for him to withdraw. He had been genuinely glad to see Tony again; but later when at intervals the incident revisited him, he was assailed with cloudy misgivings. Somehow he wished that Tony's memory had not been so tenacious; and he wished that Tony's wife's sister did not do cleaning regularly for Madame Elise.

The summer wore along; September came at last. Luther governed his restlessness as best he might, but these final days were more of a tax on patience than all the long weeks that had gone before. The other servants at last got word; the butler came back from a week's outing in Michigan; at the house there began to be a great airing, shaking, beating, floor-polishing and window-washing; he ran out his automobiles and went over them in minute detail; and still the time lagged interminably. He was in constant fear of being held to account for the excitement he could not always master; it would break out in spite of him in fits of unreasonable irritability, or unreasonable elation, which Ellie would have been quick to notice had it not been that she herself was now hurrying and worrying over preparations for the fall trade and her opening-day, and gave way at times to nervousness manifested in snappish words or hysteri-

cal merriment. Not until almost the last day when Luther got a telegram: *"C. C. C. & I. Grand Central* 6.40 *p. m. Wed.* 17 *Jos. Ordway,"* did she question his behaviour; and then it was only to remark with wifely sharpness untouched by suspicion that he seemed mighty glad vacation was over, so he wouldn't have to be around home so much!

"Aw, Ellie, I'm tired settin' doin' nothin'. I wanta git back t' work," Luther argued not unskillfully. "You know how that is y'rself."

"I guess I'd oughta! Only your job don't look so awf'ly like work to me," she retorted tartly, but repented of this piece of spleen the next moment. "Oh, I didn't mean that, Luther. I was just kiddin'. You ain't mad, are you?"

"Sure not! That's all right, Ellie!" said Luther blithely. He would have forgiven her much worse speeches than that; indeed, he was not aware of either offense or forgiveness, so complete was his indifference. And ironically enough, this same facile amiability roused Ellie more than a show of the bitterest resentment. If he did not even care to get angry with her——! All the ever-ready doubts and suspicions, scotched for a while, raised their heads and went hissing through her mind.

Luther meanwhile, in serene ignorance, went off to the Hill jubilantly and made a painstaking toilette, and with the big car in a state of spotless perfection drove down to the Grand Central. They came; she came! He had not allowed himself to expect her, in terror of disappointment. But they came, and there was Juliet, radiant-haired, clear-eyed, maddeningly near and maddeningly unapproachable as before. And he had the unlooked-for, the sublime good fortune—or did she man-

age it?—of going off with her to the baggage-car to get the Boston bull she had bought at some Long Island dog-show, while the other men went to see about the trunks which in the heavy travel of the closing season had somehow miscarried. Mrs. Ordway was not with them; she was staying east a while yet, it seemed. Luther got the dog out, and with a stray nail and the monkey-wrench from the automobile tool-chest, pried open the crate. When the Ordways senior and junior returned, Juliet was hugging the freed dog, laughing over the sleek, delighted, wriggling, licking armful; and the chauffeur was putting away his impromtu tools in deft and silent decorum.

Her mother was to be gone until some time in October, as Luther heard with immeasurable content, tinctured only by a kind of superstitious distrust of so much good luck. For the absence of Mrs. Ordway, Juliet told him, "made everything a great deal easier." There were not nearly so many excuses to be fabricated, so many fibs to be told. A young lady may drive out every day with the chauffeur in no fear of exciting remark; how is she to get about otherwise? Besides, Juliet was housekeeper now, and must attend to manifold errands downtown and elsewhere with which ordinarily she would have nothing to do. It was, in fact, so much easier, that they must have grown a little careless, or they never would have been caught, as they were, one hot September night down by the stone wall near the short cut through Mr. Loring's grounds, when a tall man in evening clothes came blundering upon them unexpectedly, very much to his discomfiture and theirs.

"I seen that guy before. It's th' same one I showed th' way t'.Meigses this evening," Luther said, after the encounter was over. "He didn't look at either one of

us good enough t' know again. Aw, here, y' ain't going?"

"Yes, I *am!* I'm frightened—it might have been somebody—*anybody*——!"

"Aw, please! You're always puttin' me off——"

But she had her way and went. She always had her way, and Luther was becoming increasingly restive under it. Of course, as he would say to himself, it was up to him now; it was always the man's move at a certain point; no girl would make it. But she could show that she was ready to have it made; any one of them would do that much—any one, it seemed, but Juliet Ordway! That was another of those irresistibly alluring differences; she kept you guessing! All practice, all experience, all masculine intuition went for naught. She must *know,* he thought, all girls *knew,* though it was like them to play off innocence for a while, make a pretense of not knowing. But Juliet defeated him without any affectations; broken sighs, eyes of hot entreaty, long meaning silences, she responded to none of them, yet he was sure she was aware of them, of their purport. It was as if she surrounded herself with a viewless screen that was not misunderstanding, not indifference; he did not know what it was! But there was no penetrating those crystalline defences by any attack he could devise; it was conceivable that she would parry him with adjurations not to be "silly," or with laughter and that stock information that he was "so funny"! Perhaps all "society girls" were trained to this unnatural attitude; but Luther repelled the suggestion with violent disbelief or distaste. No, there was nobody like Juliet, no girl in the world! And he was crazy about her, and she—she—he went over the beaten track again and again.

One night he waited outside on the terrace for a signal—the turning off and turning on of a light three times repeated; it came, and to his careful tapping, she opened the long door. Luther had not been in the living-room before; there was only the light of one lamp burning under a shade of dark Oriental silk, and the fitful blaze over the logs on the hearth. The place was warm with a faint, damp perfume from some hothouse plants and ferns and cut roses in the sun-room beyond. Juliet was slender as a flower-stalk in one of her thin, light, lacy dresses; she stood graceful and wary with softly bright eyes. "You must speak very low," she warned him, whispering.

The young man, at the moment, could not speak at all; his breath came short as he looked at her in the dim, shadowed, fragrant intimacy of this room. He went over to a big lounge drawn up to front the fire, and as the girl moved to pass him, intercepted her; he drew her down onto his knee. She made no resistance; the slim, half-clad body nestled contentedly in his arms. He began to speak then, huskily murmuring endearments, reproaches, desperate supplications. Why did she treat him so? Why was she so hard? Why didn't she tell him once for all that she didn't care for him, so that he could go shoot himself and be done with it? He was suffering, he was in torment, he was dying by inches; couldn't she be sweet to him *once?* Only *once?* She did not answer, only stirring in his arms with a sigh he barely felt, yet hope blazed through him. He whispered against her neck, "Juliet! I—I know a place where we can go——"

They heard Joe's nightkey grating in the lock.

# X

The race-course at Utopia on a fine October afternoon used to present a most engaging spectacle; it is set in a pleasing landscape of the Middle West, rimmed with yet wooded hills, and the autumnal colorings against a high blue heaven charm the eye; but even at its best, its main attractions are not directed at lovers of nature. Of old, they were approved and certified, so to speak, by the congregating in handsome numbers during the racing season of the socially elect. It was once the thing to go to Utopia. Society or People You Know, or Everybody went by those extinct means of transportation, the tandem and the four-in-hand. As much blooded stock pranced and nickered outside the oval as within it; there was a blinding display of top hats, fancy waistcoats, field-glasses, neat sporting toilettes of the feminine gender; there were lunch-hampers and champagne, and the club-house bloomed with expensive millinery. In addition to these Known, some thousands of the Unknown contributed color and animation, milling about the enclosures and up and down between the stands and the betting-shed; only part of the picture then, they are all of it now! "It's like any other fad, without rhyme or reason. People went for a while, and now they don't go—except in job-lots such as you see today," Meigs told his friend. "They lay it to the mutuels, or automobiles, or blue laws or anything you choose, but they all agree that the racing-game is played out in this part of the country. I wasn't

surprised when Joe couldn't get anybody to go with us this afternoon. No one takes much interest in it any more."

"Thought it was a sizable crowd myself, and they seem to be taking enough interest, *'Come on, you Resolute!'* et cetera," said Levin. "Fellow behind me a minute ago had a voice like the siren on a fire chief's auto—and Resolute didn't get in the money after all! Let's see, perhaps I may as well dispose of these mementos——" With which Mr. Levin distributed a number of small green chips of pasteboard to the breeze, and fetched out a fresh cigar as an aid to philosophy.

"I somehow feel as if we hadn't filled the rôle of gracious hosts, Dan'l."

"Well, I got hooked for about a hundred and eighty, if that's what you're referring to," said the other amiably. "Hold your hat, will you, Don? The matches keep going out."

Joe ran up the steps and edged through to them with a meagre sheaf of greenbacks. "This is the first and only dividend of the afternoon," he said with a laugh. "We're a great bunch of sports! Well, I had a nickel laid by to get across the bridge with; save and have, you know! What do you say we get out before the crowd begins to move? There's only one more, this five-eighths for two-year-olds——"

"Probably nothing in it for forty-year-olds!" Don said. "This isn't my lucky day. Why, I'd just as lief, Joe. Where is this place you're going?"

"Over behind Fort William. It's got a great name for chicken-gumbo and corn fritters; I telephoned this morning to make sure of a supply. You don't have to mention what you get on the side, but I understand it's first-class."

"That'll be interesting. I don't know much about the South," Levin said. "This is the genuine, old-style, before-the-war cooking?"

"It's the genuine, old-style, before-the-war drinking. You never tasted anything to approach it in New York, even in the best days, Dan. Everything there was always blended stuff—at any rate I never got a swallow of good whiskey in New York all the years I've been swallowing. What you'll get here is the real, old, Anderson County product, and there's nothing like it on earth. What's the matter, Joe?"

"Can't find my gloves," said Joe, rummaging amongst the rugs and cushions. "I didn't need 'em coming over, but it's going to be cool presently when the sun goes down. I can't imagine what's got into 'em——"

"Most likely another man! If they were lying round where any of these numerous colored fellow-citizens could get at them, that is."

"No, I remember now! I left them in the other car—my little car. Juliet's taken it out this afternoon. I hope she won't lose them—she left word she wouldn't be back till late. Well, come on, let's go!"

They wove in and out between the hills, going back into the countryside, out of sight of the river, through small, newly platted suburban settlements that were building up in a style so foreign to Kentucky traditions as to draw pitying and indignant anathemas from Donelson Meigs who was almost as much of a stranger hereabouts as Levin himself. "There! *That's* a survival! They've got *that* to go back to and copy——" said he, pointing tragically to a spare, white clapboarded, old house with a panelled door and fan-light under a portico that was a wooden adaptation of classic motives, yet exhibited a quaint dignity all its own. "They have

*that*—and they build bungalows with roofs in tawdry imitation of the Japanese and stonework that looks like hunks of chewing-gum! We let subdivision architects go free, and put bigamists and defaulters in jail——"

"Not many of 'em!" said Levin. "Look, Don, we *are* coming to something now!"

"That's the place," said Joe, expertly slewing the wheel. "It's the Turkeytrot Inn—Inn, *alias* roadhouse, of course—but it was the old Beverly homestead, I believe."

Levin surveyed with unfeigned interest the wide, flowing steps, and fluted columns supporting a triangular pediment of Parthenon suggestion, the cracked old black-and-white marble squares of the porch floor, the rows of high, twelve-paned windows with arched top-sashes, the long ridgepole, the balanced chimnies. Ill-kept and debased, the house yet had a fine air, and might have been fancied to extend its definitely dissolute welcome like a broken-down gentleman recalling the manner of his better days. "It's the real thing," said he admiringly. "Just what you read about. Nothing stage-y and artificial. The modern work in imitation always looks to me a little conscious somehow."

They got out, went up the steps, and were opened to by an elderly negro in a white jacket who was "absolutely in the picture," as Meigs remarked, his decent and circumspect bearing harking back to more elevated times. He gave Joe a civil direction where to take the car, and ushered the others along the stately central hall into a room partitioned off at the opposite end which was evidently used as an ordinary. There was only one table set, however, indicating that they were the only guests.

"Livelier than this sometimes, I guess?" Levin asked him.

"Yes, marse, yessuh. Sometimes."

"I should think when the races are on you'd have more people here."

"Nossuh, not any mo' 'n any othah time. Hit don't mek much diff'unce. We gits 'em along durin' de whole yeah."

"I take it the Turkeytrot is a place for other refreshment besides chicken-gumbo and Bourbon, Daniel," said his friend. "And within almost a stone's throw of those damned respectable, nauseating bungalows!"

"Well yes, that would be my guess too. But it's been a great old house!" said Levin, gazing about with full appreciation. "Notice that white woodwork in the hall?"

They went and inspected it again, discovering a cross corridor of like ample proportions whence a majestic flight of stairs ascended to the upper stories. The hall was paved with the same black and white marble tiles as the verandah; on either hand, very high and wide doors opened, they conjectured, into what must have been anciently double-parlors. A dilapidated mahogany table of beautiful lines still stood in probably its original position against the mitred panels of the low wainscot. The place was incredibly dirty, melancholy and grandiose; and its effect lost nothing by the note of sinister discretion imparted by the silence and those closed doors.

Joe came back, casting observant and inquisitive glances. "Lonesome, isn't it? Met any Beverly ghosts yet?"

"Why, we seem to be the only people here, quick or dead, besides the fine Kentucky antique in attendance."

"Don't you believe it! The back premises are alive with coons, all shades and shapes and sizes. There's another car there, too. I'd have run into it, only one of 'em came and wig-wagged me where to go. You can

hardly see to get around, it's so badly lit, and all cluttered up with trash, chicken-coops, wood-piles, Lord knows what—real nigger style. Better have something, hadn't we?" said Joe hospitably. "It's kind of coolish, and they told me dinner wouldn't be ready for a while yet. Where's the bell, do you suppose?"

Before they could institute a search, however, the old negro reappeared from nowhere, like the djinn of an Arabian Nights' tale, whom the mere expression of a wish would summon; and he singled Joe out for the one in authority with the uncanny instinct of his race. "Yessuh, yes, marse!" He brought a bottle and glasses; they were clean and when he drew the cork, an ambrosial bouquet scented the whole room. They watched him pour, appropriately serious.

"Solidly built this place is!" said Levin, still looking about with curiosity. "I'll bet that door is two inches thick; and look at the walls! How old is the house?" he asked.

"Ah don' jus' know, marse. But them walls is sho'ly thick. They got studdin' bofe sides an' a aih passage in betwigst. Yo' cyant heah nuffin', not a soun', f'om one room to de nex'."

"There are circumstances in which that would be a strong recommendation," said Don, gravely. "Well, here's looking at you!"

They drank and the two others watched Levin as he rolled the liquor under his tongue. "That *is* good!" he said with befitting gravity; he took another drink. "It's great!"

"Told you so!" said Don in triumph. "Can you buy a bottle, Joe?"

"Why, you're supposed to. That's the idea when you order. We'll hardly get away with this quart here but

we can take it along and finish it tomorrow on the links—if the dry agents don't beat us to it! Have another?"

They had another. "I guess I can risk taking a bottle with me," Levin said. "It's too good to pass up the chance. Do they serve anything else? Wine?"

"Lord, yes! Anything you want!"

Doors into the farther regions swinging now and then admitted prosperous soup-pot and frying-pan odours; and ere long there began a rhythmic drumming which Joe interpreted in direct connection with a delicacy known all over the South as beat biscuit. "They pound the dough or batter with a mallet, you know."

"Yes, I think I've eaten 'em in Baltimore—Charleston—somewhere down there."

"Have another?"

They had another.

"Where do all those doors go to, d'you suppose?"

"I can form an idea," said Don. "However, let's ask Nestor!" And the old negro returning opportunely with some hopeful signs of dinner in the way of small trays of home-made pickles and jelly, he inquired: "Those rooms out in front are for the *solitudes à deux,* hey?"

"Suh? Marse? Oh! Them's private dining-rooms, suh. Foh small pahties."

"Why, Nestor, why this reticence?" said Don, upon whom the real old Anderson County product appeared to be taking some effect. "Speak right up and call a spade a spade! Did you say *dining*-rooms?"

"Yessuh. De othahs is upstairs, suh."

"That's better, Nestor. You don't have to expurgate for us. We're all Episcopalians," said Don weightily. "Never have to expurgate for Episcopalians. You expurgate for the Methodist trade. Episcopalians——!"

He waved an airy gesture. "Go as far as you like! Hey, Daniel? Am I right?"

"Yes, you're a hell of an Episcopalian!" said the big man, shaking with laughter. "Do they all get that way on as little as he's had?" he inquired of the old darky.

"Nossuh, not all of 'em—but right sma't!" said Nestor, smiling indulgently. He had the truly heavenly patience, tolerance and understanding of an old Kentucky negro servant. *But oh, what nights we've had at the Mermaid!* Joe said to himself that he never would be afraid of Donelson Meigs again!

The gumbo was brought, a thick dark blend wherein little wheels of okra companioned little dice of ham and fricasseed chicken, the whole accompanied by a dish of feathery boiled rice; the old waiter with a napkin on his arm was passing around their table with the soup-plates, when uneasy rumours arose from the direction of the bar and kitchens. Someone was plainly seen to beckon him from the swing-door. He caught the signal with more alertness than would have been looked for in one of his years, but probably the vassals of the Turkeytrot were disciplined to vigilance and ready action, for he deposited the plates at once with a word of apology to Joe—"Please, suh—marse——!" and shuffled off briskly. They heard agitated murmurs at the door.

"Oh, my prophetic soul, the biscuit's burnt, boys!" said Don.

"No, something's up!" said Dan Levin, as Nestor shuffled back. The colored man's old, wrinkled face was expressionless as a mask, but his step, his movement, his whole presence were charged with alarm and warning; it was as if the jungle of his ancestry where existence itself depended on stealth and caution, walked with him.

"Please, suh, marse, dey done got er tip dem ajuns is

gwine be here. Marse, you 'n de othah white gemmen bettah move on!"

*"Hey?"* They all got to their feet, startled. "What's that?"

"Dem dry ajuns, suh——"

"Good Lord!" ejaculated Joe helplessly. "But they only want the proprietor, don't they?"

"Yessuh, on'y he ain't nevah heah, suh—not when de ajuns come!"

"Why, what becomes of him?"

"He keeps er cyah heah, an' dey is er man at headquahters what alluz less him know in time so's he kin beat it out de back do' 'n hunt up de bon'smen," Nestor explained simply.

They all stared at him, at one another. "Well, is that all? What happens after that?"

"Nuffin', suh. Dass de las' of hit," said the old darky; and he reiterated: "You-all bettah move erlong, gemmen!"

"I'll go get the car!" said Joe and started off, almost running. "Don't forget the whiskey, boys!" he shouted back.

"Well, I like this!" said Don Meigs with a great show of indignation. "The proprietor of this den of iniquity gets off scot-free, and they pinch *us,* who are merely enjoying an innocent lark. What do they want to arrest *us* for?"

"Please suh, marse, dem p'leecemen figgah dey got t' erres' *somebody,"* said the old man reasonably. "An' 'scusin' you-all what's heah, dey ain't nobody what dey kin erres'!"

"But what can they charge us with?"

"Ah think mos' inginerally hit's disorderly conduck, suh."

*"Disorderly conduct!"* said Don, with prodigious severity. "Nestor, you're expurgating again. Disorderly conduct means specifically ladies. We haven't got any ladies; we wouldn't have 'em on any consideration—at least *I* wouldn't. *This* man might. I wouldn't put it past him. He's pretty hard-boiled. But *me*——!" said Donelson virtuously. "It's a gross injustice! Charge *me* with disorderly conduct——!"

"If you don't look out, you'll qualify all right!" said Levin between amusement and impatience, hustling expeditiously into his outer clothing. "Here's Ordway! Get your overcoat on, Don, the old nigger knows what he's talking about. Damn it, we don't want any notoriety!"

"Oh, I say! I'm awfully sorry it's happened this way!" said Joe, panting up the steps. "Of course they're due to pull these places every so often, but it's a pity it had to happen right now. We're out of luck today, that's sure!"

"Never you mind!" said Levin, grinning. "That old waiter's worth something, not to mention seeing Don get all lit up this way——"

"Disorderly conduct! D'you hear that, Joe? That's what they nick us for. It's an outrage! No ladies around——"

He halted, the words dying on his lips. They all turned, following the direction of his eyes. The doors into one of the rooms had been opened, probably by some too-zealous underling, less astute than Nestor. There was a fire burning gaily on the hearth, a little table laid with flowers and wine-glasses and lights. Juliet was putting on her motor-coat, the young man helping her.

They all stood and stared; Joe's motor, at the porch, hummed a dramatic undertone to the silence. Juliet, who

had recoiled a step, advanced again; she spoke in a rather high, rather strained voice, but with a natural vivacity. "Oh, Joe, there you are at last! I've been chasing you all over the country!" She looked at the other men and nodded and smiled. "Mr. Meigs! Oh, it's Mr. Levin, too! I see you've taken good care of him!"

The men could not speak. It ought to be set down to Donelson Meigs's credit that the spectacle sobered him; possibly, in his flighty way, he had been playing at being more drunk than he was. But even he, though much quicker-witted than the other man, could not match Juliet's self-possession. He stammered something, he did not know what. Both of them avoided looking at Joe Ordway in a kind of terrified humanity; Joe himself stood motionless, all the healthy pink color fading out of his round face. He looked like a grey old man, stricken, haggard.

"You-all bettah hurry, gemmen!" said the old negro, civil but urgent.

With the words, all at once, the need for haste, terror of publicity, scandal, the newspapers, fell upon them like an armed enemy out of ambush; had it been a matter of mutual guilt and blame, Don and the other man, to do them justice, were both of them stout-hearted and generous enough to stand by, face it out, take their share. But this nightmare discovery——! They cringed in a panic from seeing any more, hearing any more; they were retreating, they were all but running away headlong, when Joe spoke, arresting them: "I'll take my sister. We'll go first, if you don't mind. That's the little car out there, Juliet? I guess one of you can drive——?" He paused, then added formally: "I'm very sorry to give you so much trouble."

*"My good God!"* said Don Meigs to himself. Aloud, he could not utter a word. He and Levin ran out of the house and around to the back, stumbling and swearing in the dark and their frenzied hurry. A tribe of negroes were gathered there, whispering and giggling excitedly, and one of them brought a lantern; they found the car and got in and Levin took the wheel and backed out and turned. They heard a roar from the exhaust of the other engine, then its wheels speeding down the road. "Hold up, Dan, here comes somebody!" said Donelson.

It was the old waiter who came with his quick, shuffling tread, thrusting a weazened, monkey-like head into the zone of their lights. "Please, suh, marse, you-all is got t' tek er diff'unt road f'om what you come by. You tu'n at de firs' lil' bridge, an' git onto de Lexington Pike——" he went on with careful directions. Levin gave him a handful of change. "Thanky, suh, marse, thanky!" They got under way at last.

Nestor's instructions had been so detailed that they picked up the Lexington Pike without difficulty, in fifteen or twenty minutes, and feeling themselves in safety, stopped to light a cigar apiece. Upon each one the effect was as if he had also stopped to think for the first time since leaving the disastrous scene; all this despatch and secrecy began to assume an extravagantly unnecessary air; here they were running away, hot-foot, like a pair of adventurers in a romantic drama, and from what? From a piece of unwelcome knowledge which they could not leave behind, run they never so fast and far! The intrigue was about their feet like a net; yet it was none of theirs; they desired nothing so vehemently as to be rid of it. And perhaps this idea was in the back of Levin's mind when he said: "We don't need to step on

'er any more; we can just jog along. Your minions of the law can't hold us for anything now, and we don't want to catch up with Ordway."

"I hope not!" Don ejaculated whole-heartedly.

This was almost the first time either one had spoken, save for a word or two incident to finding their way, since the flight began; but after a silence, Don said: "The man was their own chauffeur."

"He was obviously somebody's chauffeur," said Levin. There was a further silence, then he said: "I suppose that brace of young fools were staging an elopement. But why Kentucky? They're both of age, by their looks. All the squires in Ohio gone to the races?"

"They don't want a squire, Dan," said Don Meigs. "The fellow's married."

Levin gave an exclamation; the car swerved; in the darkness he turned a startled face towards his friend. "Married? Does she know it? Does the girl know it, do you think?"

"I don't see how she can help knowing it. The man's wife has some kind of a beauty-shop where all the women have been going to buy stuff—cosmetics—all that sort of thing. I've heard them talking about it. They all do the same things and go to the same places in droves, you know. Even my mother knows. I remember Joe saying something about Nichol's wife—that's the name, Nichols. Juliet could hardly help knowing. It's—it's pretty bad, Daniel."

"Yes. That girl——! I wouldn't have believed it. Looks as if the Ten Commandments and the State Statutes both got a blow, this time, Don!"

"Hey? Don't! It's too—it's too—why, the Ordways are nice people——" He made a nervous gesture. "*Nice* people! This thing——! Think how that girl

must have lied and plotted! She had to do it all, you know; *he* couldn't, in his position."

Levin made a sound of assent. "I'm sorry for that brother of hers."

"Yes. Poor Joe!" Donelson stared gloomily at the night, and the fields, telephone-posts, houses flitting past, for a good while in silence. At length he said: "Well, they weren't upstairs."

Mr. Levin made another sound, but it was not so easy to construe this time. "I trust the chauffeur skipped out when the rest of us did," said he. "Not that consequences would worry *him* much. He's undoubtedly out of a job; otherwise probabilities point to the chauffeur's being all to the good!"

"Oh, maybe it was the first time. Give 'em the benefit of the doubt, anyway!" said Don; but this exhortation to charity lost something of its force by his next words. "It couldn't have been going on any length of time; it was too risky They'd have been found out before this."

"Well, I wish it had been anybody but us that had been around when it *was* found out! That girl——! I wouldn't have believed it!"

"Yes. The Ordways—everybody knows them, you know, Dan. They—they're *nice* people!" Donelson repeated in helplessness. "Joe said his mother wasn't home yet, didn't he? That's one piece of luck, anyhow. I hope to God *she* never finds out!"

## XI

The other automobile coursed swiftly along in almost unbroken silence all the way; the Lexington Pike, the long loop working back towards the river, the town, the bridge, the city streets, the steady up-grade to the North Hill were accomplished without incident; there was no pursuit, no interference. The Hunter's Moon came up round and very white; exaggerated asterisks of lights along the bridges and river-banks trembled prettily in the water; on the Hill a soft and chilly fog rolled across the links. It was a beautiful October night through which the grim little chariot went forward with who knows what load of unhappy anger, fear, disappointment, ugly revelation? Juliet spoke once: "You don't suppose they will say anything? Don Meigs and that other man?"

"Say anything? What for? It's nothing to them," said Joe harshly. "No, they won't say anything."

"I thought they wouldn't," Juliet said, not apparently in relief, but with the satisfaction of a judgment vindicated. After a minute she added in a tentatively reassuring way: "Because nothing happened, Joe, of course. Nothing happened."

Her brother did not answer, gave no sign of hearing her, in fact. They reached their own gate and turned in and Joe drove up to the main entrance of the house. He stopped the car and said: "Go inside and wait for me."

The girl might have been expecting some such order; at any rate she obeyed with a novel submission—or perhaps it was only cool and consummate indifference.

There were lights here and there about the house; it was not late. She was taking off her coat in the hall when her father came out of the morning-room at the head of the stairs, with his eye-glasses and the evening-paper, and called down: "Joe! Juliet! Who is it?"

"It's both of us!" Juliet cried back. "We went out separately and came back together! Ran into each other!"

"Well, had your dinner?"

"Oh, yes! Place over the river!" She ran up the stairs to him. "Poor Pops! All by his lone!"

"Oh, I got along all right. There's a telegram from mother. She's coming tomorrow evening."

*"Whoop-de-doo!"* Juliet shrilled riotously, and cut a caper on the landing, while her father looked on amused and indulgent. "I won't have to order any more dinners! Hallelujah! There's Joe coming in, I'll tell him!" She raced downstairs, and Mr. Ordway went back to the morning-room with his paper.

The brother and sister went silently into the living-room; they looked at each other steadfastly a minute; to a witness of the scene there would have been something terrible about those two hostile young faces.

"How long had you been there with that fellow?"

"Only a little while—about half an hour, I think. They hadn't brought all of our order yet."

*" 'Our order!' "* Joe echoed her in stifled fury; then he got himself in hand with an effort. "Have you ever been anywhere with him like that before? You know what I mean."

"No."

Their eyes met full, and Juliet's did not waver; it was Joe who looked elsewhere, his features tortured with doubt and shame. He walked to and fro, while his sis-

ter, subsiding on the lounge, looked on with unimpaired self-command. At last she said: "Don't work yourself up into such a state, Joe. I tell you nothing happened. And nothing was going to happen, either!"

He halted abruptly at that, facing her. "Nothing happened? Nothing going to happen? I suppose he's not flesh and blood, then? I suppose he didn't have every encouragement, every chance? Nothing going to happen!"

"It wouldn't have, just the same! I could have managed him," said Juliet in her competent way. "I had managed him all along."

Joe made a wild gesture; he uttered an inarticulate sound of disgust and reproach and pain. "You said that as if it had been going on for some time, and it must have been for you to get this far. But I don't see—I *can't* see how you *could*—how it ever began!"

Juliet did not immediately answer; she sat seemingly considering thoughtfully with some effort of memory, weighing and measuring, or reconstructing and setting in proper succession the incidents of the petty history. Then she said in a manner at once coaxing and reasonable: "Why, Joe, I just wanted to see what he would do."

He stared at her in bewilderment, echoing her words again with the sensation of trying vainly to reach and touch her across illimitable isolating seas. "*Do?* Why, he'd behave like any other man. He made advances to you, and you let him? Is that it? And he went on, of course. Any man would. Nothing new about that—not to you, anyhow. You've had enough attention from men to know what he'd do. Only—you knew about his wife—I can't see how you got to this point with him, unless—Juliet, you're in love with him?" He got the question out with a wrench; he would have felt it no

more degradation to have uttered blasphemy in Juliet's hearing; he thought wildly that it *was* blasphemy to name love in such a connection. And it was to his own sister that he must name it!

She heard him with a slight change of expression, but it was merely from attention to anxiety, as she moved a hand in warning. "Sh-h! Do be careful! Some of the servants might hear!" she said, turning her head and listening. Joe automatically copied her, both of them still for a tense moment. The house was quiet, but Juliet got up, tiptoed noiselessly to the door, and sent a quick and cautious survey around; she came back and rearranged herself on the sofa. "No," she said, with a little shake of the head, a little reassuring smile at her brother. "No, I'm not a bit in love with him, Joe. That's all right. He's just a common man, you know. I wouldn't fall in love with anybody like that. No, I only wanted to see what he would do. And you're mistaken; he wasn't at all like our kind of man—well, in some ways, perhaps—but it was different. That class——! They're not like us."

Young Joe Ordway stood looking at his sister, listening to her, striving to understand her in a strange and racking turmoil; he could not but be relieved to know that Juliet was not in love—call it that!—and that, in her own phrase, nothing had happened, yet realized with a kind of horror that the other culprit, the man, had his sympathy. Every word she said revealed an attitude of mind that he himself shared; it was the attitude of their whole world, not unjustifiable. *That class*—scores of times he had used those very words—*was* different; they were men and women, one treated them with all possible humane consideration, but they *were* different. The difference was inevitable, theorize as you chose;

there must be classes. But the thing to do was for the classes to let each other alone; nothing was wrong with the system, but something might be monstrously wrong with the individuals. It came upon him with devastating force that it was his class, Juliet's class, that invariably transgressed. This chauffeur had only done what every other man on earth would have done in his place; but Juliet——! What had *she* been doing? He spoke at last painfully, with mounting indignation. "Juliet, you talk and you've been acting as if you hadn't any soul. I don't know whether you've got a mind or not, but if you have you don't get any good out of it. You only want to stir yourself up with some kind of a new thrill, or a new sensation all the time. This miserable business—why, you wouldn't have dared to try anything of the kind on with any man you *knew,* Don Meigs or anybody like that! He'd know every move of the game and he'd beat you at it. So you go to work and vivisect this poor fool of a chauffeur, that doesn't know any better than to act like a natural man, and to take you for a natural woman. You sit there and talk about it complacently—and what you've done is shameful! It's shameful, and you don't know it!"

In his distress and excitement, Joe's high, thin voice cracked on the last words with an effect so grotesque that Juliet might almost have been forgiven her smile. "Sh-h!" she said again; and he had to check himself, though her capable prudence somehow revolted him. "Don't get on a high horse, Joey!" she said good-humoredly. "I keep telling you nothing happened——" Here Juliet paused suddenly, with a return of her meditative look. "I wish Mr. Meigs and that Levin man knew that. That nothing happened, I mean. I wish there were some way of letting them know."

"Tell them yourself if you think you can make them believe it!" said her brother roughly. He gazed at her with sombre eyes; sick at heart was poor Joe, sick and shamed.

"Oh, well!" Juliet said, and shrugged away that aspect of the affair as too troublesome to mull over long. She reverted to her original thesis, stubbornly. "You may say what you please, I *knew* it would be different, and it was!" Her lips curved into a smile at some recollection. "He really was awfully funny."

The household rose late Sunday morning, as was its habit; it was rather easy-going in respect to hours on week-days, for that matter. This indulgence was one of those which had accompanied the Ordway accession to fortune. For twenty years, Mrs. Joseph had practiced housekeeping, as she understood it—that is to say, after the sufficiently lax, if well-intentioned methods of most American châtelaines of her era—to the best of her ability. She made over yesterday's roast into today's hash, and washed the dishes and pressed Juliet's dancing-class dress in emergencies; and Joseph senior conscientiously turned out to fire the furnace at six o'clock on many a nipping winter morning, mayhap he even cut the grass and carried out the ashes more than once, so unreliable is the average neighborhood man-of-all-work. Those days were over now; they had not been such bad days, when all's said, but while they lasted, Mrs. Ordway's inveterate dream, as she smiled to remember, had been of the existence modelled upon the standard English-novel pattern she was going to lead "if their ship ever came in." It featured such elegant idlenesses as breakfast in bed, and tea on the terrace in the afternoons; dinner would be at eight, she would make Joseph put on his evening clothes—she needed no urging to put on

hers—the children would not appear; there would be a butler, five courses, champagne——! She never said a word to her husband about the florid mirage; it was all of a piece with the Paris millinery, the antique furniture, the Spode dinner-service, the thousand-and-one "advantages" for the children that she craved; no harm thinking about it, if she kept it to herself. Not for worlds would she have let him suspect that she had a wish ungratified; he was so good to her!

And lo and behold, the ship actually did come in! All those hitherto resolutely unvoiced desires were fulfilled, and it developed that Joseph, too, had cherished some whose existence Alice Ordway, who believed that she knew every thought in her husband's head, had never once guessed. Silk socks and his own bathroom figured most prominently in the list; his wife was touched and humiliated out of all proportion. Silk socks and a bathroom to himself—so little as that? Why, he might have had them, he might have had the silk socks anyway, if he had not been giving her everything! She cried about it, accusing herself of rank selfishness, to Joseph senior's acute dismay and perplexity; he comforted her with caresses and assurances that she had always been the sweetest wife a man could have. They were a very simple Victorian couple.

This Sunday morning, then, Mr. Ordway arose late; and took a plunge in his own bathroom and arrayed himself in the silk socks presumably, whistling the while in the cheerfulness engendered by expectation of his wife's return that evening. Everything had gone along all right, but the house was not the same as when she was home; Juliet did her best, but you couldn't expect the child to keep things running as smoothly as her mother; she was out so much of the time with her young friends

—and that was where she ought to be, of course. He must warn Alice not to let Juliet get the faintest inkling that he had not been perfectly comfortable and satisfied during her regency; he wouldn't hurt Juliet's feelings for anything. She had to put up with a good deal of nagging from Joe, as it was.

Breakfast in bed or upstairs was a super-refinement for which, as Mr. Ordway himself said, he had no use. He got down about ten o'clock, and there was everything in readiness and the bulky Sunday morning paper doubled in careful folds over the back of his chair just as if Rudolph had not read it first, at his leisure by the kitchen fire. The scoundrel brought the grape-fruit, brought the eggs and bacon and coffee and hot rolls as demurely as if opening the paper before the master of the house were a breach of etiquette no butler would dream of committing; and Mr. Ordway asked him if Miss Juliet had come down yet?

"No, sir. I think her breakfast was sent up."

Joe came in, looking a little sallow and owl-eyed, and slumped into his chair and declined everything but coffee. Mr. Ordway conjectured sagaciously that his junior had had a pretty lively time of it yesterday with the other men.

"Thought you'd be out on the links by this time, Joey."

"Hey? Oh, I—I don't believe I'll play today."

"Why, didn't I understand you to say you were going out with Meigs and that friend of his?"

"Well, that's off."

"What's the friend like, anyhow?"

"Levin? Oh, he's all right."

"Want part of the paper?"

"Well, anything you're through with——?"

They divided it between them, and Joe sat staring at

his section with eyes that saw nothing. He was fruitlessly turning and twisting the problem of how to open with his father the question of dismissing Nichols. There was no fault to be found with him, no reasonable ground for so arbitrary an act. Joe grasped at the hope that the man might have taken leave himself, knowing that dismissal must impend. "Is Nichols here?" he asked the butler.

"Yes, sir; he came up this morning for his breakfast."

Joe resumed the inward debate. Of course, as he now realized, Nichols could not leave off-hand for the very same reason that he could not be sacked off-hand; namely, explanations would be demanded. Not improbably he was having as much trouble as Joe himself trying to fabricate them; it was possible that in the end they would both have to apply to Juliet, the brother thought in dreary irony; she was the only fluent and plausible liar among them.

His father went up to the morning-room, whither Joe, after some aimless straying about the house, followed him; he lit a cigarette and sat down still considering and rejecting in futility. The establishment had been wrapped in semi-somnolent Sunday stillness; but all at once both gentlemen began to be remotely conscious, as it were, of movement and *pourparlers* going on, somewhere below in the front hall. Juliet's Boston bull appeared to have reached the scene and was vociferating either welcome or disapproval; the disturbance, whatever gave rise to it, became so animated with clashing voices that Mr. Ordway laid aside his paper and sat upright, listening; and it even claimed Joe's attention from his morose speculations. "What in the deuce——?"

Rudolph appeared, reporting in a hesitant manner

oddly at variance with the speed at which he had come upstairs: "There's a—a—there's somebody asking to see you, Mr. Ordway."

"Somebody? Do I know him? I mean is it anyone that comes to the house?" said Joseph senior, somehow startled; it was unusual to see Rudolph in the slightest degree upset. The man was a Swiss by birth, otherwise cosmopolitan; he spoke half a dozen languages, had lived everywhere and knew both his own world and that of the people he served thoroughly.

"It's not a—a him—a gentleman at all, sir," he said, confusedly. "No, sir, it's nobody you know, I—I don't think. It's a—it's a lady." But Rudolph's manner conveyed so plainly his impression that this last statement might be open to doubt, that Mr. Ordway heard him with increasing wonder.

"A lady? To see me or Mr. Joseph?"

"She said you, sir. She wouldn't give her name."

"Well, I'll go down——" He rose but Rudolph made a respectful gesture of dissent.

"I told her I'd speak to you, sir, and she said she'd like to see you particularly private. She said private business, sir. She—she wanted to come up after me, sir, but I got her to stop downstairs till I could ask you."

The father and son exchanged a glance of astounded interrogation. "Some crank, Rudolph, do you think?" Joe asked.

"I—I don't know, of course, Mr. Joseph, but I don't think so. It's a—she's just a woman, sir."

"Well, bring her up, if that's what she wants," said Mr. Ordway, beginning to be interested in what seemed to promise adventure. But as Rudolph departed, he said to Joe: "Private business? It's just occurred to me, Joe,

your mother or Juliet may have a bill somewhere they're afraid to tell me about——"

"Well, I hope it isn't private business with a gun or a bomb, that's all!" said Joe, in a mixture of amusement, concern and curiosity. "Sounds suspicious to me. You know everybody thinks you're made of money, father, and this may be some Bolshevist in skirts that believes it's her mission to remove capitalists from the world——"

Rudolph arrived with the lady; he left the room, probably going no farther than was necessary to get himself out of sight, a conjecture which apparently presented itself to the lady, for she followed him with her eyes before looking at Mr. Ordway; and without paying any attention to the latter's conventional greeting, announced abruptly: "Better send that fella where he can't hear. You don't want him rubberin' in."

"Madame——"

"Who's that?" she interrupted, glancing sharply at Joe.

"That is my son," said Mr. Ordway, speaking collectedly and gently, because he felt that in all probability he had to deal with a person who, if not quite crazy, must be a little unstrung, to say the least. "You don't mind stating your business before him——?"

"No, I guess he's all right. It don't make much difference anyhow," said the woman with a sudden moderation of manner which, however, they could perceive she achieved by a stark effort of will. "I expeck I been ackin' kinda excited and funny," she added apologetically. "Bein' so set on seein' you and all. And that there man that opened the door, he didn't want to leave me in, just like he thought I'd mebbe take somethin' I just *had* to see you. It's—it's very important."

The older and younger Ordway surveyed her in silence, puzzled. Neither one of them had ever encountered insanity; they involuntarily associated it with King Lear straw and tatters. But aside from the hysteria which she was patently trying to control, something which surely no lunatic would do, there was no such suggestion of an unbalanced mind about her. Of course, they thought simultaneously, it is a matter of common knowledge that you cannot judge safely by appearances in such cases; still——? The visitor was in the neighbourhood of thirty years old, not homely, not pretty. She had on a dark blue serge dress ornamented with braid, a round cap-like head-covering made of folds of iridescent blue and gold stuff with a pendulous cluster of gilt grapes at one side, a strip of fur around her shoulders, a pair of high-heeled slippers held to her feet by a network of crossing straps. It was evident even to their masculine observation that the costume was such as a thousand women might wear and conveyed no hint, one way or the other, as to her mental condition.

"Won't you sit down?" said Mr. Ordway, as carefully as before. "Then if you will tell me what I can do for you——?"

"You'd oughta know who I am first," said the woman. "My name's Nichols. I'm Mrs. Nichols."

Joe Ordway fell back a step; he braced himself against a table. *"My God!"* he ejaculated inwardly. He looked down, waiting in terror for what must be coming. The poor creature was not crazy, she had found out, of course she had found out, that was all!

His father, for his part, received no enlightenment upon hearing the name, for an instant; then he recollected. "Nichols? Mrs.——? You mean my chauffeur? *That* Nichols? You're his wife?"

"Yes, I'm his wife."

"Well, won't you sit down, Mrs. Nichols?" said Ordway senior, vastly reassured. Nichols's wife, he remembered, had a shop; she sold hats and cold cream; she could not possibly be insane. But more than likely she had got herself into some business tangle, and had come to him for help. What Joe said was true; people thought he was made of money. That would explain her. Mr. Ordway said to himself that he had known men to behave in not too sane and sensible a style under the same circumstances. "What can I do for you?" he asked again, very kindly and cordially this time. It's a hard world for women in business, thought the humane gentleman.

But Ellie remained standing; it seemed to her unbecoming her position and theirs, a kind of indecency, for her to accept even the trivial hospitality of a chair in this house. "I come here to see you about him—my husband," she said in a strained voice. "I want you to stop what's going on. Because I won't stand for it! 'T ain't right I should haveta. I'm his wife, I'm married to him, and he b'longs to me, and other women ain't no business coming between us——" Do what she would and against her own better counsels, this marshalling of her rights, added without doubt to much previous bitter brooding over her wrongs, got the better of Ellie. Her voice rose and sharpened threateningly; her bedizened face took on a violence of expression appalling to the two men. "I want you to stop your girl, what she's doing! I want you to make her quit trying to take him away from me! You gotta have her leave my husband alone, or I'll learn her my own self!" she almost screamed. "I—I——" She had to stop, choking.

Joseph senior heard this tirade with a kind of shocked clarity of mental vision; it became quite plain from his standpoint that Nichols's wife was neither more nor less than a screeching termagant. They had had a cook like that once; she was a good cook but they had to discharge her. Most probably Mrs. Nichols was a good saleswoman for hats and Jan—whatever the stuff was called, but of all the infernal tempers——! He spoke with composure and authority. "Not quite so loud, please. Don't you think you may be making a mistake? Nobody here wants to take your husband away from you. I don't know what has happened for you to get that idea——"

"What's happened? Plenty's happened! I guess you *don't* know! She's going to tell *you,* ain't she? Your girl's going to tell *you!* She—she rides round with him all the time! They ride round together all by theirselves all the time!" cried out Ellie furiously—the more furiously, perhaps, because this accusation proclaimed with all the force at her command, still failed of an effect, even to her own ears; it sounded feeble, pointless. "Lotsa people seen 'em, and come and told me about 'em—her and him—*lotsa* people! I want you to stop it! I want you to have her quit hanging round him and trying to take him away from me——" She went on with incoherent charges, desperately conscious of futility, desperately conscious of an actual wrong she could not prove. Joe Ordway listened with a growing thankfulness that humiliated him; if *this* was all she knew or could say! The poor thing's intuitions were just; but if *this* was all she could say!

"'Ride around together'?" repeated Mr. Ordway. "Why, certainly they do. That is what your husband is hired for——"

"No, it *ain't!* They ain't any business to do the way they do! You don't *know*——!" Ellie broke off, quivering and staring; for at that moment Juliet came to the door.

She looked fresh and lovely in a négligé extravagantly foamed and frilled with lace, trailing the colors of the lining of a sea-shell in almost transparent gauzes about her bare arms and beautiful bare neck and dimpled shoulders; it clung to and accentuated every roundness of her figure. She came, attracted by the noise, and paused on the threshold, gazing with wide eyes. The other woman looked at her in a dismay that filled Joe with wretched sympathy.

"What's the matter?" said Juliet, glancing into all their faces in turn. "I heard——" She came a little farther into the room, her eyes on Ellie. "Who is it?" she asked with the candid curiosity of a child; she was charming.

"I'm Mrs. Nichols! I'm his wife!" said Ellie sullenly. "I come here to let you know you gotta let my husband alone——!"

"Nichols?" Juliet queried with a blank face. "Oh, it's the chauffeur you mean——?"

"You *know* I mean him—you *know* it's him I mean! Letting on you don't know!" screamed Ellie in venomous disbelief. "You'd better leave off trying to get him away from me—his own wife! You better leave off, you——"

*"Father!"* said Juliet. *"Joe!"* She shrank back, looking from one to the other of them, helplessly appealing.

Her father advanced. "Juliet, I will ask you to leave the room," he said with grave politeness. "I—I have business with this—with Mrs. Nichols."

She obeyed him. There was silence for a breath.

Then Ellie began again with her pitiful and futile insistence. "You can stop it—you gotta stop it——"

"I have every intention of stopping it," said Mr. Ordway; and he very deliberately sat down to his desk, put on his eyeglasses, selected a pen, took the cheque-book out of its drawer. "If you will wait one second, please." He spoke with the courtesy that builds a stone wall in a moment; and Ellie, in victory, knew herself defeated. The pleasant-faced, middle-aged gentleman in his nice lounge suit, with his contained manner, mysteriously defeated her. Arrogance or pomposity she would have detected and fought on equal terms; but this self-control, this manly and unaffected good breeding somehow turned aside every weapon in her poor arsenal. Mr. Ordway glanced at the calendar, apparently engaged in some sort of computation, and wrote out a cheque; holding it in his hand he rose and addressed her again with the same forebearing consideration. "I have added what seemed to me to be fair to the amount that was due your husband, in consideration of the fact that he is being required to leave without notice. We only had a verbal agreement about it, but I am sure he understood it the same way I did; I am sure he wouldn't leave without letting me know a reasonable time beforehand, so that I could fill the place. Now if you will go down to the garage with me, I think we can settle all this without any further—er—talk."

Ellie apathetically accepted his solution; there was nothing else for her to do. The apples-of-Sodom success left her in the same or worse pain and trouble; but she herself could have devised no better way out of it; she was bound and delivered over to unhappiness. Mr. Ordway escorted her downstairs and out of the house.

It did not take long; in ten minutes or less he was

back. Joe heard him shutting the front door and hanging up his hat; and he came up to the morning-room with a certain confident and satisfied finality of bearing. "Well, that's *that!*" said he, and went over to the table to pick out a cigar.

"How did he take it? Nichols?"

"Why, just stood there, without saying anything. Didn't appear surprised at all. I daresay it's happened before, or something like it. She began to cry. I got away as quick as I could. I didn't want to be a witness to any family row, and I most certainly didn't want to appear to take sides. But the fact is, Joe," said the older man, sinking his voice confidentially, even a little guiltily, with a glance towards the door, "I can't help feeling some sympathy for the man. Fancy being tied to that creature! You actually wouldn't blame him for making eyes at some pretty girl once in a while; it's only human nature."

Juliet came back at the instant, alert and inquisitive. "What was it all about?" she wanted to know. "What did she want?"

"Never mind!" said her father decisively. "They seemed to be having some domestic difference, and she thought she would get me to interfere on her behalf! The only thing to do was to pay him off and tell him to go. Can't have anything like that happening a second time."

"Is he really going? Oh, my, what will mother do for her *Janice* cream!" Juliet exclaimed in semi-burlesque concern. She moved over to a window whence, through the now denuded trees, a bit of the driveway was visible, and presently turned towards them a face brimming with mischievous amusement. "They're going! You ought to see them! Nichols looks perfectly *weird* in his own

clothes. I never saw him out of uniform before." She peeped again. "He has his suit-case in one hand, and she's got hold of his other arm like a policeman. She's just *walking* him along! Father, *do* look!" She collapsed on the *chaise longue,* lost in laughter.

Mr. Ordway's dignity could not resist the temptation; he craned cautiously to get a glimpse of the melancholy little procession, and retreated in his turn on the broad grin. "I judge our late chauffeur is having a very bad quarter of an hour. Well——!" He wagged his head solemnly. "She can't bite him anyway. Not with those teeth!"

Joe moved violently. "Oh, for God's sake, father, don't laugh! How can you laugh? Don't you see the whole thing's horrible?"

Ordway senior, trimming the end off of a cigar, looked at his son with raised eyebrows, surprised, but as usual, making allowances for Joe. "Why, of course it's horrible, Joey. It's worse than horrible, it's very disagreeable!" said he, becoming epigrammatic. "That dreadful, vulgar woman coming here, pushing her way into the house, and making a scene, and squalling around about her husband! She's probably ruining him with her temper and her insane jealousy. He can't hold any job if that's what she's in the habit of doing, and it's a pity, for the man's a good chauffeur, and knows his place and his business. Of course it's horrible, but no reason to go into hysterics over it. *We* haven't got anything to do with it." He lit the cigar, speaking between inhalations. "I'm glad your mother wasn't here. One of us will have to drive when we go down this evening. Let's see, it's Sunday. I wonder if we can see about an advertisement in the *Observer.*"

## XII

After it was all over, Luther, among other profitless moments, spent some peculiarly profitless ones cursing the luck that had directed his selection of the Turkeytrot and as if for a diabolical joke, sent Joe Ordway and the dry-agents there, too. There were a dozen roadhouses either one of them might have chosen; anywhere, anywhere on earth but the Turkeytrot he and Juliet would have been safe. Or shift the time but half an hour, and they would have been safe; for had they reached the place only that much later than the others instead of earlier, he would have recognized the big car, or they would have had some other warning which would not have escaped Juliet's quick senses. Up till then everything had gone smoothly; it was his day off; he left as usual in the morning; she was to take the little car and meet him at an appointed place and hour, down town. He remembered how frantically he had hurried to get to bank and draw some money, how he fumbled over it with nervous fingers making a different count two or three times to the teller's faintly contemptuous amusement; and how he went out finally and got a square away and in sudden fear of not having enough, dashed back and drew another fifty, and had the same trouble counting it while the clock advanced towards noon and the Saturday depositors in line behind him shoved up, openly expressing derogatory opinions about his character and mental equipment. He laughed at and with them; he was so excited, so happy. He went into a

telephone-booth and called up the Turkeytrot and gave an order with feverish insistence on everything being swell, the swellest they had, never mind what it cost; he remembered his own naïve wonder at the calmness with which they heard him and wrote it down and read it over to him. The proprietor inquired, in a business-like manner, if he wanted besides the private dinner, to reserve a room upstairs for all night? In the ashes of calamity, Luther felt again a torturingly blissful thrill.

To the very end he had been uncertain of her, he had grown to know so well her tantalizing sweet cruelties. And, indeed she kept him waiting long enough at the obscure corner they had pitched upon, merely for the satisfaction of one final teasing moment, he was sure. But she came at last, steering somewhat timidly through the down-town traffic, laughing, changing color divinely when she saw him. He remembered the little, still, bright, dining-room at the Turkeytrot, their first kiss; he remembered whispering to her that he was going to get even with her for that wait on the corner, keeping him guessing that way, he was going to get even with her for that and all the other mean things she had done to him!

"Get even? How? *Oh!*" She tried to laugh, avoiding his eyes, coloring again; her blush was not an ordinary reddening, but a wave of lovely cool pink tinting her whiteness enchantingly. He told her how pretty it was, how pretty she was, how pretty her neck was; it was after they had had some of the champagne.

Now it was all over. No slightest hope of a renewal visited him as it might have a more imaginative man. Luther was quite unable to picture himself chauffeur for another North Hill family, getting or making opportunities to see her again, recommencing the intrigue. He

abided the decree gloomily, but in complete submission. It never even occurred to him to wonder how Juliet herself had fared upon the discovery, what her brother had done, or the rest of them, how much Mr. Meigs, whom he recognized, and the other man suspected or would report, whether the North Hill knew or would ever know, and what would happen in that event. All his thought of her and all his longing were concentrated on the past; oh, for those dreams, those maddening delicious doubts and hopes, those stolen moments that would never come again!

It was all so definitely over that Ellie's entry into the affair, as stormy as it was, could not arouse his resentment, scarcely even his interest; he did not care what she had found out or how. Their life, at best, was one perpetual round of jealousies; she suspected him so often without cause, it made no difference that this time it was with cause. He would not take the trouble to invent denials or exculpations as on like occasions in the past. The poor woman herself suffered far more than he; she would not have believed him, yet she wanted him to lie to her! Any lie, however clumsy, that aimed at consoling and reassuring her, that showed the feeblest flame of feeling for her would have been better than his silent and indifferent endurance. As it was, she was driven to lying to herself; Luther cared for her, she *knew* he cared for her, he had never cared for anybody else; it was all the fault of that girl, that—— Sad to say, Ellie reverted to a vocabulary enriched in early years by unavoidable consorting with youngsters from the slums that neighboured Amelia Street, for the descriptive epithet she privately applied to Miss Ordway. That girl was to blame for every bit of it! And upon cold and sober reflection she herself also had erred! She had no

business to get mad and act the way she had, going to his boss's house and bawling them all out that way, and shaming Luther before everybody. *That* was what was working on him; he was not brooding over that girl, he was mad at her, Ellie, his wife, and good reason why! She besought a reconciliation with tears, miserably conscious all the while of her own miserable attempt at self-deceit.

"Oh, Loot, now you'll never care for me again, after what I done! I know I hadn't oughta, but, Loot, I couldn't help it, I just couldn't *help* it! I was just about crazy thinking about that girl being after you that way. Loot, I *know* you didn't do nothing, I know you didn't know what you was doing, nor how it would look to other people. You didn't re'lize that girl was after you. A man don't ever know, they're so easy led. She was trying to get you away from me, and oh, Luther, I was so afraid! Luther, you don't care for her, you *don't!*"

"Aw, my God, lay off talkin' 'bout it, Ellie, won't you?" said Luther, wearily. "'S all right what you done, and anyways, it's done, ain't it? What's th' use?"

"I know, I know—I just can't *help* it! You set there all the time just *thinking* and I can't help worrying it's about her, and—and——" She put her face against his shoulder, sobbing.

"Aw, 's' all right, Ellie, I keep tellin' you it's all right——"

Ellie pushed away the lifeless arm he had put about her, and flung off from him in helpless and hopeless and pitiful rage. "Yeh, you keep telling me it's all right, and you *know* it ain't! *All right!* Anything to keep me quiet, huh? Here I work and slave and do my best, and you go running round with *her!* And then tell me it's *all right!*"

"I don't know what you want me to say," said Luther stolidly resigned. "'Tain't any use my tryin'."

Poor Ellie herself did not know. Alas for both of them, each hankered after the impossible, Luther to taste again for the first time those lost, secret, lawless delights; Ellie for a devotion which had actually never been hers, manifested in fantastic and unwholesome outbursts of passion such as no decent woman is supposed to know anything about, and all decent women occasionally envision.

The unhappy colloquies frequently ended in his leaving the house to return later in that condition not inaccurately described in the vernacular of Amelia Street as stewed. If this happened during the day, Ellie in the refuge of her store and the omnipotent anxieties of business did not know, and had no leisure to think about or dread it; and when, coming back from an arduous day of hats and *Créme Janice*, she found him as sometimes befell, lying about the place more or less stewed, it was no severe shock to her. At least he was home, where she could take care of him. But when one of their dismal scenes wound up by his slamming out of the front door at night, nobody knows what vain agonies of remorse and terrified anticipation harried her. She saw him falling down somewhere and lying there undiscovered in the raw, blighting weather, till morning, and ultimately dying of the exposure; or being run down by an automobile; or knifed and knocked on the head in one of the dens where he got the stuff; or blinded and poisoned by the stuff itself. She used to rouse Roy from his tired slumbers, and he would get up uncomplainingly and put on his clothes and sally out in the grim, wintry dawn; and generally, to the credit of his perseverance and resourcefulness, he would bring home the

delinquent after an hour or so of search. Luther was not hard to manage; he was always willing to do anything for or with his friend. The liquor brought out no ugliness or brutality in his nature; it merely induced a melancholy in which he was very gentle and amiable and given to pitying himself. He wept when he told Roy about Juliet; Roy got the whole history, first and last, a dozen times. In fact, he had it from Luther when the latter was sober, more than once; Luther could relie on his discretion, and singular as it may seem, on his sympathy. Roy himself was an upright man; never in this wide world would he have departed from fidelity to a wife or respect for the virtue of a maiden. His simple principles were of a solid and stalwart structure; but his principles had nothing to do with his affection for, or his understanding of Luther. If he reasoned about it at all, which is doubtful, he would merely say to himself that Luther was "that way"; it seemed to inhere in his friend's character, as Roy saw it, to love irregularly and recklessly, to be forever straying out of the staid matrimonial fold. When Luther lamented that he knew he had not treated Ellie right, Roy could not, in honesty, disagree with him; he said "Uh-huh," and let it go at that. And when the other rhapsodized to him about Juliet's hair, her eyes, her neck, Roy uh-huh-ed again, perhaps with a shade more interest; but he neither approved nor disapproved. He performed that miracle of self-sacrifice, possible to so few, of listening. He was a solace, a refuge, the shadow of a great rock in a desert land! By an irony of which, however, not one of them was even remotely aware, Ellie too had recourse to him, pouring out her troubles, easing her soul, taking comfort in his unfailing patient attention. Roy did not actively defend Luther, to her, but there was a kind of tacit un-

derstanding that he appeared in court on his friend's side, and, strangely enough, that pleased and soothed her. She could believe in Roy with a free conscience; she could not believe in Luther or herself.

"He'll straighten up d'reckly, Loot will, you see if he don't!" Roy told her in his slow and serious and extraordinarily convincing way. "He's just feelin' kinda down just now on account of losin' his job an' all. They ain't much a man c'n do but drink when he's feelin' down. Loot'll leave off d'reckly he gits t' work again. You see!"

"Oh, Roy, 't ain't the drinking so much—lotsa men drink. It's—it's *her*. If he'd just forget about *her!*" Ellie said almost imploringly; she would have given everything she had in the world, even to her store, let alone the remainder of her life and her hope of salvation, to have been assured by Roy that Luther would forget, or was forgetting, so great was her confidence in the other man. And, undoubtedly Roy, for his part, would have given a good deal to be able to assure her, with a clear conscience. For that matter he would gladly have lied, if his slow mind could only have furnished him with a passable story; but the best he could do was to say: "Well, I—I guess that'll come 'roun' all right, Ellie, I guess that'll kinda wear off in time——" He had to look away from her; he could not bear to see her trembling face.

However, there was encouragement of a sort for her in the fact that the other prophecy came true; after some idle weeks, Luther did show signs of straightening up, getting hold of himself, reassuming duties that, in a manner of speaking, harnessed him to safety and clean living. He had always really liked work; his resources for entertainment were so limited that idleness automati-

cally became irksome. The only trouble now was that he had established tastes which henceforward would be measurably difficult to satisfy. He relished the easy and elegant life with which he had been associated; he had grown so used to big, costly houses, hordes of well-appointed, stylishly mannerly servants, loose spending, gossip, gaiety, newspaper mention, that any other, less spectacular way of life did not interest him. But a North Hill position or its equivalent in any other quarter reputed to be socially exclusive was out of the question, as he knew; Ellie would never "hear to it"; and Ellie, by dint of purveying to the needs of Society in the line of hats and *Janice* aids to beauty, had arrived at a fairly wide acquaintance with it, too; not by any argument could she be brought to consent to their living apart again, even had Luther secured so safe a place as that with the old lady Grace. "Th' Home for th' Blind, or this here Boys' Reform Farm, them's about th' only ones she wouldn't have no objection to!" he told Roy with acid humor. It ended in his eating the humble pie symbolized by applying to Emil Schulte.

These days, Emil appeared to be as prosperous, as leisurely and in spite of it as vigilant as of yore, if he had acquired more grey hairs and a few extra pounds of weight; and he most good-naturedly and with no slightest hint of considering it a favor on either side, consented to enroll Luther again at a figure which the younger man had the grace to accept without dickering. "Got tired of them fancy livers out on the Hill, hey, Loot?" was the only question Mr. Schulte asked; but, just as in the old days, his genially shrewd scrutiny seemed capable of reading through whatever layers of misstatement or evasion the other endeavored to interpose down to the pages of experience he himself turned

only in private; in helpless vexation Luther felt himself lose countenance under it. "Well, you know how this place is run; you know I never stood for anybody getting gay round here," Emil reminded him, still pleasantly, however; his government had always answered to that asserted to be ideal, the benevolent despotism. Upon this note of friendly warning the business interview terminated, and Luther reported for duty the next day.

He found that he had forgotten what this desultory driving was like, and wondered at himself for ever having looked with envy upon those who practiced it. It did not seem possible that there had once been a time when to be one of Schulte's chauffeurs represented the pinnacle of his ambitions. Nowadays Luther secretly considered himself wasted on the miscellaneous crew to whom his services were hired—suburbanites going down to the railway stations or the theatre, parties for the races or the ball game or the Knights of Pythias outing, business men attending conventions, young fellows treating some girl; what did they know about a really classy chauffeur? As far as that goes, what did they know about classy dressing, classy spending, classy talk, classy behaviour in general? They had never been inside the Country Club or any other club of any distinction in their lives; they did not know anybody worth while. His acquaintance with what may be called the social geography of the city did them no good; they never went to the houses among which he had passed the last year or so. He marvelled that Schulte, after all this time, had never established a really high-class trade; of course people like the Rudds and Meigses and Stillmans had their own cars and men, still there was room for anyone who knew enough to specialize in that branch, viz: the providing of handsome, complete equipages which would include—

ahem!—tall, dark, natty, distinguished chauffeurs for people who could appreciate them. When he met men attached to North Hill or other elevated households whom he had known during his own sojourn there, he morosely fancied he could detect a flavour of patronage or intolerable commiseration in their attitude towards him. "Who you driving for now? Out for yourself? Oh, Schulte's livery? That so? Well, oftentimes a per son can't stop to choose; gotta take whatever comes along!" He was driven to large statements about the pay and opportunities, or the devastating monotony of private driving, or his position, "managing for Schulte" which the others probably took with several grains of salt.

In the course of time, however, he became less critical, or adjusted himself to altered circumstances with a sour-grapes philosophy; if we cannot have what we want, let us by all means satisfy ourselves with the next best! Luther, after a while, perceived that the business-men suburbanites and other nobodies gave very decent tips, and personally did a certain justice to his superior looks and style. And there were girls; not "society girls," to be sure, but a fair grade of girls, nevertheless. They were pretty, they knew how to dress, some of them were not averse to looking once in a while at a dashing chauffeur, or to having him look at them. He could make them flutter by some play with his black eyes; he could touch a hand or foot now and then. The experiments were interesting and sometimes met with a success that, curiously enough, turned out to be tasteless, without piquancy. Instead of elation, he would feel only an apprehensive discomfiture. It seemed as if nine times out of ten the simpletons did not know how to behave! They giggled and looked conscious inopportunely; they were

so publicly and conspicuously flustered, or else they executed so many and such obvious manoeuvres with their own eyes that the affair which should have acquired pungency by being kept under cover, might as well have been proclaimed from the house-tops. Luther remembered with surprise that this was how he had supposed girls always acted until—until he suffered the painful delight of being kept guessing. Of those bright trickeries, those admirable foxy little deceits and stratagems, those inexplicable methods of denial that whetted a man's desire maddeningly, these girls seemed to have no conception. Their dull capitulation bored him; it was so facile, so alarmingly open. Oh, for the other one! Oh, Juliet, so tameless, so uncertain! He would not have tired of her in a lifetime; always she would have been "different."

About this date, the expected happened; there had been rumours of it beforehand, of course, which Luther had recklessly disregarded. But one day Mr. Schulte, that respectable citizen—respectable professionally, that is, and why should the world at large meddle with his personal morals?—owner of a respectable garage and autolivery business, received a communication from an indignant lady patron, which, coming on the heels of previous communications from others, aroused in him that emotion well known to be most formidable, the anger of a patient man. He had Luther up in the little office, and there from his swivel-chair flanked by the time-honoured calendar and cuspidor delivered himself in plain language, though on the whole neither unkindly nor unreasonably.

"I don't mind your taking a shot of red-eye about every so often, even when you show up here pretty shaky the next morning," said Emil. "Just as long as you

stay off it when you're actually driving. I don't regard it as any of my affair how much you drink, nor where nor what nor nothing about it, outside business hours. I ain't your keeper, so I ain't hardly ever said a word to you about it. But this other thing, you gotta cut it out, see? You gotta cut out monkeyin' round the girls, Luther. I won't stand for it. I got a family trade that's worth a whole lot to me, and I won't stand for it being busted up by no stuck-on-himself guy that wants to honey-up to folkses' daughters that he's driving cars outa my garage for. You ain't no call to it anyhow; you ain't no boy. You're married and that oughta do you. Of course I expeck being married gets kinda monotonous, times; must seem like it was the same thing over and over again, and nothing much to it," said Mr. Schulte, liberally. "That's one reason I've stayed single. I didn't wanta chance marrying. But I ain't telling you how to treat your wife either. I'm just saying unless you unnertake to lay off this goo-goo business, you gotta hunt another job."

"Well, I'll hunt it right now, said Luther, sullenly. "That suit you?"

The older man eyed him for a silent moment; then he said in the same moderate manner: "Better think that over, Luther. Because it'll be for keeps this time. If you quit, you'll stay quit. I'm through. Get me?"

It was an ultimatum. "All right!" said Luther, still intractable. He went home and told Ellie that he wasn't going to stay round there and do three men's work and be bossed and put on by Emil Schulte no longer! She sympathized warmly, and was loud in plaudits of his spirit, and denunciations of Schulte, the tyrant and oppressor.

He got another job readily; in fact, he got several,

in sequence, as time went on. He was a good mechanic, an all-round automobile man. He drank only at intervals, and though not always in the best of shape, seldom missed a day from work. It would be hard to say what was the matter, perhaps mere restlessness; but he could not stay anywhere long. It did not worry Ellie much, in comparison with other real or imaginary causes for worry that he gave her; there was something as much maternal as wifely in her devotion, and she had never depended on him for any kind of material help. She herself was getting ahead, making money, though she worked as unremittingly as ever, and sagely forbore increasing her establishment as many a more brilliant and enterprising but less stable commercial genius might have done. Her shop by now was a "good stand"; Madame Elise had worked up a reputation, a reliable custom. She stayed there, cramped as were the quarters, divining that this very quality contributed to, and so to speak enhanced the character of the place; to be so little somehow helped it to be choice, *recherché*, exclusive—and it may be added, prodigiously dear. The only extra expenditure she permitted herself—and that not until after lengthy prayerful consideration—was for a neat, small delivery car, which indeed was almost necessitated by her expanding trade. It was done in rich blue enamel paint the color of the *Janice* jars, and moreover bore the Flaxman-drawing trademark which appeared on their seals in a panel on one side, balanced by a symmetrically shaped and decorated monogram on the other, the whole in accordance with a design furnished by her benefactor Federmann, who continued to take a hearty interest in her affairs. For a while Luther drove it for her, delivering parcels of *Janice* or smart bandboxes at innumerable backdoors and servants' entrances among which there

figured some which he had known in other, perhaps palmier, days; at any rate, he presently developed a distaste for that job, too, and gave it up, to Ellie's disappointment. It had seemed safe as regarded those distractions of which she was most afraid; a delivery-man cannot, in conscience, allow much time for flirtations or have many opportunities; and she had hoped that it might awake in him some interest in her affairs, and "kinda bring us nearer together," as she put it to herself with a sigh. But that wistful design being defeated, she philosophically hired somebody else from whom she got, if anything, better service.

"Smart a little woman as you ever saw," Mr. Federmann reported to her ancient employer, Mr. Stein, who also remembered Ellie with a high opinion. "Right on the job and up-to-the-minute notions about everything, and easier to do business with than you'd ever expect a woman. Only place she comes short, you can't exactly blame her, she's just like the rest of 'em, any business-woman that's got a husband, I mean, he ain't any good, and she worries over him, so it's a kinda drag on her. It does beat all, Ike," said Federmann, with wondering conviction, "the rotten judgment any woman that works has about getting married! You musta noticed it. Nobody ain't ever heard of a working-woman that had a husband that was worth anything. These dressmakers and beauty-specialists and hairdressers and the whole bunch, they everyone act like a husband was one of these here—now—museum pieces like you hear people talk about, or a specimen or something you just got to keep and take care of and look at! This Nichols that Ellie's married to, I didn't know for the longest time she was married till she gotta acting so worried and I'd see she'd been crying or had something on her mind, and

then one day it all come out. Seems he's a chauffeur by trade, but near as I can make out he don't ever have any permanent employment. He can't stick. You know the kind. I seen him and he's a good-looking fella, but nobody home, I don't guess," said Morris Federmann, tapping his own forehead significantly. "Anyway, the only thing he knows is automobiles, which he could make a good living off of if he was any account. Well, she thinks he's the only man on earth! Soon's I seen how it was, I wanted her to get a divorce, and say——! If I'd been this here—now—what they call combustible, there wouldn't have been enough left of me to light your pipe with! That's how women are, though. Ten to one if he was some decent fella that all he wanted was to work and take care of her, why, he'd get the gate! But this one that ain't any good and trouble with other women, y'unnerstand me, Ike, she'll stick to him till hell freezes over. Right now he's running one of these night-hawks you see round town, and I wouldn't wonder if he did a little boot-legging on the side; he let me know he could get me any amount of it any time I wanted, but I told him nothin' doin'. I got it troubles enough already without getting in bad with the authorities."

## XIII

Mr. Levin's next visit to the city, or passage through it, for he was on his way to the Pacific coast this time, took place in the spring. The links were not yet opened; it was mild enough for play but there had been too much rain; the turf, still upheaved and broken from lately released frost, fairly squeaked underfoot with moisture. Now all the iris on the North Hill was abloom; there was a spray of tender color over the fruit trees, and the spiræa hedges whitened as if spread with shawls of bleaching lace. Walking along the lane one got a lively rural impression from freshly distributed manure on everybody's lawns; even in this restricted residential district, to use the phrase favored of the real-estate advertisements, a plebian belaboring of carpets disturbed the echoes, and there were evidences of other less noisy housecleaning activities. Mr. Meigs' family was away, the windows of the great house boarded up, with a caretaker hiding somewhere in its remote fastnesses; and Donelson himself had gone over and taken one of the bachelor suites at the Club for a month or so before leaving in his turn to join the rest at Cannes. He had his friend out to dinner, as usual, which was served for them in the pleasant glassed-in winter dining-room, and Don remarked that even if golf was interdicted, they could always get a table of auction anyhow; somebody would probably be in the lounge or around somewhere. "There aren't many living here, only unfortunate men like myself, temporarily out of a home and more or less

on the loose," he explained. "Club's not very popular as a residence, you know. Too much entertaining going on, especially during the dance season. You can't slumber serenely with a saxaphone and trap-drum discoursing jazz under your ear."

"Quiet enough now," said Levin, glancing about the dining-room, where only one or two couples besides themselves occupied the small tables. A large round one in the middle, however, was laid with candles, a mound of flowers, and squads of cutlery at half a dozen places. "Somebody seems to be giving a dinner, though."

"Yes, they'll be along about eight o'clock, and I'll probably know some of them. If not, or if they don't want to play, we can always round up enough people by telephone. Whose dinner is it?" Don asked their waiter.

"Mr. Stillman, I think, sir."

"Game's assured! You will meet the enemy and they will be yours, Daniel. Little Mrs. Stillman hasn't got done talking about your all-conquering skill yet. Let's see, it's over a year since that last time, isn't it?"

"Nearer two!" said the big man, with a half laugh. "I'm afraid we're getting to the age when time seems to gallop. I was here twice that fall, remember?"

"Well, seeing you between times confuses my recollection, of course. Our people make a dozen trips to New York for one that you stuck-up metropolitans make out here."

Their *bombe Alaska* arrived; and after a moment of appreciative silence, Daniel, in whom the talk must have awakened certain memories, asked: "Where are the Ordways now?"

"Why, they went to Algiers and then to Egypt this winter; they crossed on one of the Mediterranean boats

with my mother. Afterwards she or somebody else that happened to be over, I can't remember now, wrote they had heard they were going on to the Orient—the Ordways, I mean—and coming home that way. That's the last, I believe."

"Miss Ordway as pretty as ever?"

"Oh, yes."

"Wonderful eyes she has!"

Here Mr. Stillman's party invaded the place; both men got up and amid a great scraping of chairs, an atmosphere permeated with freesias and cigarettes and *purée* of asparagus, a good deal of movement of white shoulders and startling jewelled, feathered, cloth-of-gold head-dresses, Mr. Levin renewed several acquaintances and made several more. Mrs. George Stillman welcomed the suggestion of a partnership at bridge with complimentary vivacity, training upon him a pair of eyes that if not quite the equal of Juliet Ordway's were still notable eyes. She was very pretty in one of the brilliant and extraordinarily desultory looking evening toilettes of the prevailing mode; Don Meigs pointed out in private that the loss of a single bead would plunge him and all the other modest men in the company into a most painful embarrassment. Levin was glad to see her sister, a Mrs. Gherardi, a tall, thin, red-haired woman, whose bridge, as he knew, was both sound and daring. Don and his guest had just reached the coffee stage as the others began so they engaged to wait for them in the lounge; it would not be more than an hour.

They hunted up a comfortable corner and smoked; the lounge was made cheerful with a log-fire, cushioned window-seats, a lavish use of wicker and chintz. What other "revellers," as Don called them, had been about,

seemed to have withdrawn, and now Levin reverted to the subject last under discussion which evidently was still on his mind; but he lowered his heavy voice to a growlingly discreet undertone, following a rapid survey of the room and all the other shyly retreating corners in their neighborhood.

"Donelson, did any of that ever come out?"

"Hey? You mean——? Oh, that business! Why, no—not the way you mean, that is. Juliet fixed all that."

"*She* fixed it? How?"

Mr. Meigs elaborately lighted a cigarette. "Daniel, that girl——!" He shook his head, whether in doubt, condemnation, a kind of cynical approval, or a little of all three, could not be guessed. "Well, I'll tell you what she did. There was some talk going the rounds. It began among the servants, I've no doubt. They must have noticed something. She couldn't pull the wool over everybody's eyes, you know; too many of 'em. Besides, I was told that the man's wife was out at the house just about that time and raised an awful row. Of course I don't know how true that is; maybe it's just talk and she never was there at all. But it's perfectly evident something must have leaked out; somebody got *on*. They dismissed him, of course. Well, then, the next thing I heard, Juliet was going around openly and gleefully talking about the Turkeytrot and describing it to people——"

Levin ejaculated aloud. *"What!"* he almost shouted, then smothered it, glacing around again in a panic. He stared at his friend in ludicrous amazement, and Donelson nodded gravely with half-shut eyes over the cigarette.

"That's what she did! Told in detail what it looked like and how 'funny' it was and all that, and how she

went there with Joe for an adventure, to see what it was like, and ran into you and me!"

There was a pause, the two men looking at each other with dawning grins.

"Well?" said Levin at last.

"Well, naturally the story bye and bye gets around to me; naturally I corroborate it; naturally the whole thing promptly dies the death! It was true, wasn't it? She was there, and her brother was there, and so were you and I! Nothing more to talk about. Q. E. D.!" The glowing tip of his cigarette described a parabola like a tiny comet as Don flourished his familiar gesture.

Daniel Levin, still staring, meditated an instant; then he swore; then he laughed. "Why, the brazen little devil!" he said, not without admiration; and meditated again. "Make no mistake about it, Donelson, it took a bright woman to do that! To know, I mean, that the truth would serve her better than the best of lies. It took nerve, of course, but it took more sense."

"I've always thought she was bright."

"What about her brother?"

"Why, nothing about her brother!" said Mr. Meigs, with a gravity which was genuine now, whereas before his every accent had been dashed with ironic relish. "I've scarcely seen Joe since. He avoids me, of course. He must have supported Juliet's version, but actually it wouldn't have made much difference what he said or if he kept silence. He's the kind of man that seems doomed to be negligible."

Levin made an assenting sound. After a while he said: "The chauffeur seems to have done the handsome thing. He didn't kiss and tell."

Donelson Meigs looked shocked; he stirred in protest. "Why, certainly he didn't, Dan! Good Heavens, as if

anybody——! He must be too much of a man for *that*, you know. Give the devil his due!"

"Well, what about *him?* Anything in particular?"

"No, nothing about him, either. He seemed to sink out of sight. I daresay he's around town. His wife still has her shop, and people go there. That class——! Nobody ever knows what becomes of them."

"That class and our class ought to stay *put!* They ought to flock by themselves," said Levin with the force of profound conviction, unwittingly pronouncing a conclusion in agreement with poor Joe Ordway's. "The minute they come into too intimate contact, it means ruin for somebody!" Daniel halted with rather suspicious abruptness; the fact was he had just recollected that ancient tale of Don Meigs and the manicure-girl!

The Stillman dinner-party opportunely came in, unknowingly relieving him; their waiters brought the coffee and tables and cards; everybody drew, the game began. It went along with entertaining fluctuations of luck for an hour, two hours. Mrs. Stillman, who had not the most remote understanding of it, nevertheless received some unimaginable stimulus: her face flushed, her pretty eyes shone, she bid with a childish delight in making a sensation, and attracting notice, and won steadily. Mrs. Gherardi played with a cool and humourous calculation. A slender, youngish man whom the others called "Jim"—Levin did not catch his last name — lost his temper from time to time and flew out at his partner and the opposition indiscriminately. There were a Mr. and Mrs. Harold who played together of necessity, since all the rest agreed that "it would be just taking the money out of one pocket and putting it in the other" to pair them otherwise; and they had to fall in with this ruling, though obviously *à contre-*

*coeur*. What married couple ever existed who liked to be partners at bridge? A not unwelcome hiatus occurred when George Stillman, after a period of being dummy during which he had vanished somewhere, reappeared, mysteriously beckoning; and they all rose with one accord and not too many questions, and trooped downstairs obeying his signals, to an obscure nook of the grill where a tray of cocktails awaited them. It was illegal to serve drinks at the Club, or to keep or bring liquor there, but George—who, notwithstanding, was a perfectly honest law-abiding citizen!—had managed to purvey this refreshment in a vacuum-bottle which he kept outside till the moment of usefulness in the automobile tool-box. "It locks," he explained, and was astonished at the merriment that greeted this simple statement.

They went up again, and Levin had just dealt and announced a spade-make, when they heard some incoherent noises outside, towards the entrance and the gravelled fore-court where their machines were parked, an exchange of shouts, and a horse's hoofs thudding. Mrs. Gherardi, who was dummy at her table, went alertly to the long glass doors which opened into the vestibule on that side, and looked out, but could see nothing for a second; then she called out with amused interest that she believed the mounted policeman's horse had run away with him! "Just think, our one, lone, lorn mounted policeman on the North Hill, now he's a dismounted one!" Two or three of them turned their heads, the rest were too deep in the game. The steward came out of the office; some bell-boys fluttered in the background; the disturbance outside increased; and then, with a startling loud suddenness, the policeman, in his uniform and leggings and spurs, banged through the doors.

"Say, is they a doctor here? Any of you gents a doctor?"

Everybody looked up, taken aback, not at once understanding him. Mrs. Gherardi stood to one side—she had had to jump back with considerable agility to get out of his way—in her long, close, trailing black draperies, with a half-smoked cigarette between her fingers, staring. In another instant they all spoke confusedly. "What is it? What does he want?"

"Is they a doc——?"

The man they called "Jim" jumped up briskly; he was at the policeman's side, he was actually reaching for the door-knob, as he spoke. "Where is it?"

"Smash-up a little piece down th' road. It's right where th' stone wall butts, out, th' end of Loring's place. They's a guy——"

The doors slammed again; the doctor was gone! They heard his flying feet on the steps, on the gravel; no more dramatic exit was ever contrived, with less deliberate intention. It was astounding. The policeman, himself undoubtedly a man of action, drew a breath, and gazed around upon them, sympathetically appreciative. "Well, sa-ay! Doctors! You don't never need t' tell 'em! They get there first and find out afterwards. Where's the phone, lady, please?"

They were all on their feet now, excitedly asking questions. It appeared that there had been, as he repeated, a smash-up; a delivery-wagon with two men in it had run head-on inta that there stone wall that butted onta th' road down here a little piece, he guessed they knew where it was. He was riding his beat, as usual, and heard this machine coming towards him lickety-split musta been th' len'th of four-five city squares off; he heard 'em an' says t' himself: "There goes somebody

bustin' the speed-limit wide open!" An' he hadn't more 'n thought it, when he heard 'em go, *Zam!* Right inta th' wall! No, ma'am, they was just one of 'em that was hurt bad, th' other guy was on'y stunned an' shook up some, or mebbe bruised, he thought—no, ma'am, he couldn't say how bad th' hurt one was. Sir? Why they wasn't nothin' left of th' delivery-wagon hardly, it was just scrap. Ma'am? Why, Loring's gardener, he heard th' racket, too, an' come down, an' they was some other people there. First thing *he* done, as soon as he had seen what had happened, was t' beat it t' th' nearest phone like this here at th' Club, so's to get a doctor 'n' call up th' station. And where *was* th' phone, please?

They left him at the instrument, calling up the Adams Road Police Station, and telling Harry that this was Steve, an' have th' boys get a move on with th' bus. . . . They gathered in an uneasy group, interested, somehow fearful. Someone remarked on how quick Jim Lawford had been! These doctors——!

"And he's only an eye-specialist, too!" said little Mrs. Stillman in tones of wonder. She looked longingly towards the disordered card-tables. "I did have the *best* hand. It's a shame you so often get them and don't have a chance to play them! Well, what shall we do now? Cut again and begin over? Jim running off that way throws everything out."

"Oh, I guess we'd better not play any more, Hester," said her husband uncomfortably. "This thing's too—too—— Any of you feel like going on?"

Nobody felt like it; they stood or wandered, fidgeting, in excitement. Steve could be heard imparting to someone at the other end of the wire that they wouldn't of been burning up th' road that way, chief, if it hadn't been that. . . . Yeah! Sure! . . . Well, he couldn't

say. Y' see, chief, it was this way: he just nachelly had t' beat it somewheres 'n' git a doctor f'r this guy that was hurt. . . . Well, perhaps two cases, he couldn't say. It was busted t' smithereens 'n' running round all over th' road, 'n' glass splinters ev'where. . . . Yeah, sure! Aw ri', chief! He hung up the receiver.

The suspense and inaction ended by all the men snatching their hats and setting out for the scene of the accident in Steve's wake. Harold fell into step with Levin as they strode along. "I think it's a couple of rum-runners they've got hold of," he said. "Judging by what that fellow was telephoning."

"Sounded like it. Stolen stuff, do you suppose? They'd be hurrying anyhow. Well, one of them seems to have got what was coming to him."

The night was warm with a moist wind blowing, a sky of scudding clouds, a kind of grey light abroad, so that they could walk fairly well, after their eyes got used to it. From the turn of the road they could see the place; some lamps from machines or garages near by had been collected, and figures moved to and fro across the light, and pocket electric torches winked busily. The wrecked car had been dragged away from the wall, probably to free the men, and lay in the middle of the road; it seemed to be all wires, a chaos of strangely feeble-looking twists of steel, amongst which odds and ends of glass caught a wandering gleam here and there, but when they got up closer they saw that the skewed and half-shattered body must have been almost new; the dark paint had a high, glossy finish like a piano, and there were ornamental designs and lettering on the panels. A nauseating stench of gasoline, whiskey and ditch-water enveloped the whole scene.

The injured man had been carried to the side of the

road, and laid down, and someone had brought a cushion from a machine to put under his head; and some of the lights were ranged there in a semi-circle on the ground. They could see the doctor, crouching on one knee, the glare of the lamps full on his white evening-shirt, his serious, attentive face; he did not seem to be doing anything, he was motionless, holding the other's wrist, seeming to watch. Darkness framed him in a ring, and somewhere in it, someone was talking disjointedly in a broken and breathless voice. A man came hastily towards them.

"That you, Charlie?" he said guardedly. "Say, don't let anybody—*oh!*——" he broke off, peering. It was another policeman.

"We—we came over from the Club. Your man was there," said Stillman, hesitating. "Is there—is there anything we can do?"

"You can keep away, cap., that's what you can do! And don't let nobody else come around—no ladies anyhow," said the other peremptorily. "We got all th' help we need." He jerked his head in the direction of the doctor and added as if to explain: "Guy's dyin'."

Horror swept over them like an icy wind; they all recoiled involuntarily. "Isn't there anything——? Can't the doctor do anything?" Levin asked, with an effort, recovering himself.

"Naw. He says it ain't hurtin' him, though. He says he was as good as gone when he got here—neck or spine or somepin. He said it th' minute he saw him." The officer went forward to halt the patrol-wagon that came churning up out of the darkness from Adams Road that moment; long funnels of light spread from its lamps, preceding it down the lane and across the broken automobile; a number of policemen debarked. Stillman and

the other men lingered in a knot, feeling in the way, not knowing what to do; it seemed equally inhuman to go or stay. They heard the voice in the dark in agonized entreaty.

"My God, doc, he ain't——? He ain't——? Oh, my God, can't you do nothin'? Doc, please! You can do *somepin!* My God, you ain't goin' t' let him die?"

There was a tragic irony, to them, in hearing young Jimmy Lawford addressed with these desperate and confiding prayers, as if he held the keys of life and death—Jim Lawford whom they all knew, who was such a poor loser, who got into a pet if you didn't take him out on his bid of one club! But while they shrinkingly looked on, he laid down the hand he was holding, spoke to a man near him, stood up with an oddly final and authoritative air. Donelson Meigs got an appalling glimpse of the prostrate man's grey, straightened, blank features, an abhorent thread of white showing under the edges of his not quite closed eyes, a glistening damp on his forehead at the roots of his thick, muddied, tow-coloured hair; his body in rough clothes and boots, lying limp and loose, seemed very big. He was a young man —young and strong. The voice rose again in a frenzy of appeal. "Doc, he ain't——? Roy ain't——?"

Lawford shook his head. "He's gone!" he said, with a professional calm that startled the men who knew him. It made a different person of him. "Is there anything special you require, officer? Death certificate, I mean, anything of that kind? Or does the coroner——?" He stepped apart with the police lieutenant and they conferred, muttering together over a note-book and the officer's flash-light.

Luther stood helplessly by his friend's side, looking down at the still body. He could not yet believe that

this thing had happened. He said "Roy?" two or three times in a dazed, questioning voice. The policemen, talking together, glanced at him, and at length one of them said: "This guy, was he in on this with you?"

Luther stared at him, dumb for a moment. "Roy? Was he in——?" Then, as the other's meaning rushed into his mind, he began to try to tell them, wildly. "No, no, Roy didn't know nothin' about it! He just went along—he just went with me—he just wanted to be with me! Roy didn't do nothin'! he never *had* nothin'!" He pleaded with piteous earnestness: "Mister, Roy was a *good* guy! He never done nothin'! He—he was always wantin' t' go out in th' country t' live! He—he——"

The men exchanged glances. "I guess you better not talk. You been kinda shook up and got a kinda shock yourself, you know——"

"I ain't hurt! It oughta been me that got hurt, 'stead of Roy," said Luther. His face worked. "Mister, Roy never done nothin'—he——"

"Well, you'd oughtn't t' talk anyhow," said the lieutenant, interposing. "You can tell it all to the judge, that's who you'd oughta tell it to. You best keep quiet, and don't say nothin'. I'm tellin' you for your own good, you know." He uttered brief words of authority to his men, indicating the body, and they took it up.

"Don't let 'em do Roy that way, mister," said Luther in distress. "They'd oughtn't t' handle Roy rough that way."

"*He* don't know any different, bo!" said the officer. "That's all right. You can git in soon's they get him fixed."

The doctor came and joined the other men. "Hello,

I didn't know you fellows were here," he said, surprised. "When did you come?"

They told him. "You got mud all over your trousers, Jim. Here, I can wipe some of it off for you," said Harold solicitously. They had to move to one side while the toilette service was being performed, to let the Black Maria pass. Lawford wanted to know if anyone had a cigarette in his clothes, and somebody supplied him. Not one of *them* cared to smoke; the little act set him in an ugly isolation, against their will, until he explained without affectation that a mouthful of smoke steadied him after—after a business like this.

"I was wondering—I didn't see how you could enjoy it much," said honest George Stillman. "Of course, doctors——! I couldn't look at that poor devil. Lucky he wasn't mangled, wasn't it?"

"He never knew," said Lawford. "It was like a stroke of lightning as far as he was concerned. No pain. All that you saw was merely physical. It was as easy a way to go as any."

"The other man wasn't hurt?"

"No, just shocked and dazed. I looked him over, as soon as I saw there wasn't any chance for this one. No, he's all right, or will be in a day or two."

"They'll have him up in court tomorrow, and somebody will bail him out, whoever's behind him, you know —there's always somebody taking care of 'em. And in a week or a month at farthest he'll begin all over again!" said Harold, pessimistically. "How well prohibition does prohibit!"

"Probably they won't be able to prove anything on him anyhow, except transporting liquor without a permit. They can't do much to 'em for *that*."

As they walked, Donelson dropped back with his

friend. "That was that chauffeur, Dan, that chauffeur of the Ordways. You were asking what had become of him. You're answered. I knew him after a minute."

The other gave a slight exclamation. "You mean the one that wasn't hurt—that was talking in that hysterical way? Of *course!* I couldn't place him, but I thought I'd seen him before. It's queer, Dan, I run into that fellow every time I come out here!"

"Well, you're not so likely to after this—hope not, anyway! He seems to be on the down grade."

"He was all broken up about that pal of his—no wonder!"

"Yes, I noticed he said it ought to have been himself —but I daresay that was only excitement. I doubt if any scallawag realizes that he's a scallawag. The tragedy for a man like that is to keep on living. They always do; they live forever. The longevity of scallawags has been the wonder of decent people for countless ages! You look pretty husky, Daniel, in comparison to me; but if the scallawag rule holds, I'll be dancing at your funeral yet!"

Harold turned around and spoke to them. "Did you know it was midnight? I think this party had better break up. We oughtn't to say anything about the man being killed to the ladies, ought we? Just say he was hurt."

"Why, yes, all right! Don't want to startle them."

The Black Maria lunged and rolled over the cobblestones, imparting a kind of shaking movement to Roy's body lying on the floor; the men sat with their feet drawn in to avoid touching it, especially when they swung around a corner. They went at a pretty good gait. Once Luther tried to stop them.

"Look there, he moved, Roy moved then! I seen him

move, didn't you? *Roy!* He will, in a minute again, you see if he don't! Make 'em stop, mister, please make 'em stop! He's coming to, he'll come to d'reckly!"

"Naw, he ain't. He's gone! It's just the old bus joggling him. He didn't move," they told him not unkindly. "Naw, 's all off! He's gone. Gotta make up y'r mind to it, bud!"

They had no trouble with him, after that, for a while; he went with them, did as he was bid and answered what questions were put to him in apathetic obedience. It was only when it came to separating him from his friend that he roused; neither threats nor persuasions could move him; it seemed scarcely worth while to use force. He would stay with Roy. They could put the handcuffs on him, they could chain him to the wall; he wouldn't try to get away anyhow; he didn't want to get away; nobody needed to watch him; if they would leave Roy on the bench, he would sit by him; that was all he wanted, to sit by Roy.

"Well, Lord love you, set then!" said the police captain in a final weariness. The prisoner and his offense were of no real importance, and he could not escape if he tried. They let him be; and Luther sat there all night, holding the dead man's hand.